

Corcoran Press
Coverage



THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Inauguration

OUR Special Inauguration Correspondent, having taken a few days to separate the various strands of what he saw and felt in Washington, has filed the following report:

Nearly three o'clock on Saturday now. Walked over to Corcoran Gallery for opening of Leonardo da Vinci exhibit—the Codex Leicester, bought in London last December for five million eight hundred thousand dollars by Dr. Armand Hammer. Sedate crowd at Corcoran. Spotted Dr. Hammer, a spry octogenarian; a very beautiful Kay Halle; and Paul Volcker, chairman of Federal Reserve. Murmur of excitement as Mrs. Reagan was introduced, to warm applause. She was in bottle green, and looked stunning. "I am honored to open this Leonardo

exhibit," she said. "My husband and I were in the arts ourselves until we found another line of work." She cut ribbon, formally opening exhibit. A sumptuous buffet followed. Biggest shrimps I have ever seen. Biggest shrimp dip I have ever seen. Smoked salmon being sliced with Renaissance delicacy. Everywhere, a multitude of crudités, all being discreetly gobbled up, to accompaniment of discreet music from string orchestra at bottom of grand staircase. Codex, in Leonardo's own hand, consists of seventy-two sheets, ingeniously displayed

separately, so that one can see both sides of the manuscript, written backward in brown ink in Renaissance Italian. My knowledge of Renaissance Italian skimpy, and I had no mirror, so took everything on faith. Leonardo, I learned from printed legends beside the manuscript pages, dwelt in spare yet eloquent detail on water currents, astronomy, geology, and other matters. He wrote that he gathered ideas and observations as they occurred to him. He explained that "air must have darkness beyond it, and hence it appears blue," and went on to say that "the Reader will not wonder if I make great jumps from one subject to another."

February 9, 1981

Codex Leicester Adds To the Inaugural Luster

By JOHN RUSSELL

As of 10 A.M. today and through next Sunday, Leonardo da Vinci's Codex Leicester, the annotated scientific manuscript that fetched \$5.8 million when it was sold by Christie's in London last month, will be on view at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington as part of the inaugural celebrations. Made available to the gallery by Dr. Armand Hammer, its owner, the manuscript is being shown in such a way that visitors can scrutinize the front and the back of every one of its 36 sheets. At no time in its nearly 500-year history, therefore, has the codex been so accessible.

It should be said at once that although the manuscript has an undeniable fascination, it is not in itself a seductive object. Nor can its appearance in Washington be classified as "an art exhibition" in the usual sense. The codex is however a document of the highest importance to those who are captivated by Renaissance habits of mind as they were exemplified by one of the most remarkable men who ever lived.

In physical terms, the codex as Leonardo knew it was not a book of blank sheets already bound together. It was an open file to which he kept adding double sheets of four pages each. These were heaped one on top of the other, and eventually they were sewn together in book form. It could therefore be said that by unsewing the sheets and displaying them as individual documents, the present exhibition reverts to the original form.

In terms of content, the codex consists primarily of speculations noted down in the first years of the 16th century. They are written backward in a hand remarkable for steadiness and evenness. Only the specialist will be able to decipher them, but we can all admire the way in which Leonardo's hand traveled back and forth across the page, leaving no outward trace of the excitement, the impatience and the occasional testiness with which he set about his investigations.

Those investigations covered an immense amount of ground. Within a general framework of hydrodynamic inquiry, Leonardo concerned himself

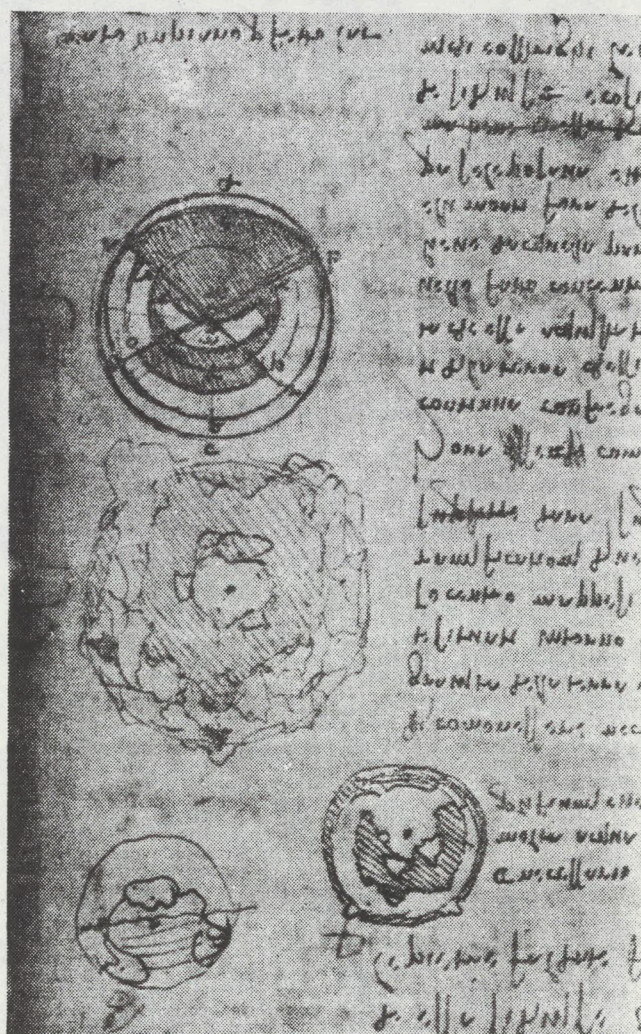
with the sun, the moon and the stars; with mountains and volcanos and underground caverns; with floods, landslides and earthquakes, and with geology, geography and the phenomena of light, shade and atmosphere.

"You will not laugh at me, Reader," Leonardo says on the back of page 2, "if I make big jumps from one subject to another." And indeed we do not laugh, but rather marvel, at the volatility with which Leonardo addresses himself to one problem after another. Why does the smoke from old and dry wood look blue from a distance? What is the exact percussive power of a moving wave? How is it that we find seashells at the top of mountain? Is the movement of the tides owed to the sun, or to the moon? What can we learn from a soap bubble? Is it true that water, when heated in the bowels of the earth, can produce earthquakes?

Leonardo was as interested to experiment with just a grain or two of millet seed as he was to speculate about the action of the Nile, the limiting effect of the Straits of Gibraltar and the role of Mount Etna in the economy of the earth. Even a single falling drop of water would set his thoughts stirring, and the codex takes on an additional fascination from the fact that he often illustrated those thoughts with sturdy little drawings of an elucidatory sort. To see all this set out in the installation designed for it by Paul Williams is a considerable experience.

The codex turns out, moreover, to be in very good physical shape. There is nothing like three centuries of aristocratic incuriosity to keep ink and paper in near-perfect condition. The manuscript was bought for Thomas Coke, first Earl of Leicester, at the beginning of the 18th century, and stayed quietly on the shelf at the family seat, Holkham Hall, until it was sent to Christie's last month. In 1909, Gerolamo Calvi published the codex in facsimile, and subsequent Leonardo scholarship has owed much both to the facsimile itself and to the flurry of excitement that followed its appearance.

The codex was first shown in public at the Royal Academy in London in 1952



© Seth Joel and the Armand Hammer Foundation

Detail from a page of da Vinci's Codex Leicester

on the occasion of the quinqucentenary of Leonardo's birth. After its eight-day showing at the Corcoran, it will return to London, pending the issue of a definitive export licence. It is however Dr. Hammer's intention that it be shown

widely in this country and elsewhere.

The hours at the Corcoran are 10 A.M. to 9 P.M. today, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday and next Sunday and 10 A.M. to 4.30 P.M. tomorrow, Tuesday and Friday.

The Washington Post

STYLE

The Arts/Television/Leisure



California painter Billy Al Bengston at his Corcoran Gallery show; by Harry Naltchayan—The Washington Post

Shades of California

The Sunlight Expressions of Painter Billy Bengston

By Paul Richard

Billy Al Bengston, whose extraordinary watercolors go on view today at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, ought to be a movie. He is lithe, tanned and good-looking, casual yet cunning. If you were to film the most Californian of California's masters, he'd be just right for the part.

Like so many other Californians, Bengston's story opens somewhere else. He was born in Dodge City, Kan. He left there at 14, true, but what could be a better hometown for a painter who would soon be known, until he tired of its toxic fumes, as the surest spray gun in the West?

Though he uses little brushes now, and frequently paints flowers, young Bengston in the '60s was a *mucho* macho guy. You could film him on his dirt bike, with crowds and motors screaming, for he used to be a professional racer, until one day in the '60s, at Ascot Park, Gardena, he crashed and broke his back. You could show him on the beach, too, with bright sun and bikinis and green walls of water rising, for he used to be a surfer, too, though he's given up on that.

But he has not lost his daring or his balance. His new, near-perfect watercolors prove what has been long

Billy Al Bengston's Sunlight Expressions

BENGSTON, From G1

suspected. Bengston is, at 46, one of the most lyrical and graceful abstract painters now alive.

That is, if you dare call these works abstractions. None was done from life; none is truly figurative; and most of them include floating squares and arcs. But though these sunny perfumed pictures, with their strict geometries and stenciled iris-emblems, are in many ways abstract, they are also portraits—not of person but of place.

They were painted in the tropics, in Venice, Calif., in Honolulu and Lahaina—and their place of making shows.

Bengston paints the sunlight, its brightness and its heat, and its glisterings in seawater. Often he refers to the look of whitewashed walls, "summoning," in the words of the Corcoran's Jane Livingston, who organized his show, "the erotic evocation of light through Venetian blinds." There are breezes in these paintings, tropic nights and blossoms, rainbows, bamboo, palms.

But they're the opposite of postcards. "I'm an abstract painter," Bengston says. "I've always been. Hell, I'm an abstract expressionist." But his works are free of anguish and none of them is messy. His mastery of watercolor, that most demanding medium, is as close to flawless as anyone could wish.

One of Bengston's pictures, painted in Lahaina, suggests a handful of fresh petals, purple, red and gold, that he has somehow sprinkled on the circle of the moon. Packed into this painting are squares, splatterings and circles, the shadows cast by fronds and the rough trunk of a palm. Somehow it suggests not just the glare of beach-light but the darkness of the night. In the newest pictures here, done last year, the liquid drifts of color that have, until now, lent softness to his shows are cut by bolts of color as earthquakes cut the crust, as lightning cuts the night.

An undertone of menace twitches in

these pictures; their paradise is not entirely secure. Bengston was a rebel once, and may be again. It is as if his love of beauty, the seduction of pure painting, has postponed attack. "With hindsight," writes Livingston, whose admirable catalog essay accompanies the show, "it is not so difficult to see that Bengston actually never was destined to become anything but a basically 'conservative' artist, concerned with values of decorative/formal tension in the long modernist tradition."

His art has always had an edge. The sweetly colored "dentos" that he showed here at the Corcoran's Dupont Center in 1969—they were made with lacquer sprayed on sheets of dented metal—were among the purest and the most malevolent abstract evocations of the Southern California mood this city had yet seen. The black and opalescent canvases he displayed at the Corcoran's 1973 Biennial ran off with the show. For 20 years or so, Bengston has had a sort of trademark-emblem: an iris seen in silhouette, a kind of bloom with claws. Inexplicable, romantic, at once flip and belligerent, it glowed within his pictures as a badge might on black leather. He employs it still.

Perhaps it's not surprising that Southern California, once famous for its outlaws, is now known for its staries. The artists of the newest lands may need to conserve most. Bengston's dark blue jacket is cut of British wool, his bow-tie bears white polka-dots. Stenciled amid irises on his green silk handkerchief is the pure painter's war-cry: "Less Duchamp. More Cezanne."

A memory of Brando, lolling in black leather, threatening and haughty, was apparent in his "dentos." Behind the luscious paintings here, some of which have been cut-out and collaged, one feels, instead, the pleasuring, endlessly inventive spirit of Matisse.

The Bengston show, one in the series "Modern Painters at the Corcoran," was supported by a grant from the SEM Corp. It closes March 29.

Dardanelle

The crack team of pianist/vocalist Dardanelle and bassist George Duivier offered lively and often moving interpretations of 20 or so of the late Richard Rodgers' more than 500 melodies yesterday afternoon in the Corcoran's intimate Armand Hammer Auditorium.

Dividing the program between Rodgers' corroborations with lyricists Lorenz Hart and Oscar Hammerstein II, the two immediately displayed their jazz credentials in several opening instrumentals, including a light-as-air "Mountain Greenery" and a sprightly "Dancing on the Ceiling."

Dardanelle's voice is rich and full

Performing Arts

and her transitions from lyric to instrumental bridge back to lyric, as on "You Are Too Beautiful," show a mature sense of the dramatics of the songs.

Little touches indicated the precise teamwork and the relaxed interplay between the polished singer and the journeyman bassist—she coming back in at the end of his solo, her opening piano note in perfect unison with his final pluck or his arco complementing her held pedal tone.

Dardanelle's emotive vocal and Duivier's deep-singing bass on the encore, "My Funny Valentine," concluded the bravura tribute to Rodgers. The sold-

out series, directed by Joel Siegel, continues on Feb. 8 with the music of George Gershwin performed by Ronny Whyte and Jack Six.

—W. Royal Stokes

THE WASHINGTON STAR

washington life

TUESDAY JANUARY 6, 1981

Celebrating the New Majority



President-elect Ronald Reagan greets Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker.



Elizabeth Taylor Warner, Sen. John Warner and Otis Chandler, chairman and editor in chief of the Times Mirror Co.

By Lois Romano

Washington Star Staff Writer

Sen. Howard Baker, R-Tenn., the new Senate Majority Leader, was guest of honor last night at an elegant, and rather large, party held at the Corcoran Gallery of Art. But he wasn't the main attraction.

With appropriate fanfare — bright lights, an army of Secret Service, and a traveling entourage — President-elect Ronald Reagan stopped by briefly to pay tribute to the man he coolly eliminated as competition during the Republican primaries last year. He also appeared to be paying his respects to the host of the party, the Times Mirror Co., which publishes the most powerful newspaper in his home state, the Los Angeles Times.

"I will be departing in a few minutes," Reagan joked the second he walked in the door, "because not only did I not wear a black tie, but I wore a brown suit."

The real reason for Reagan's quick exit, however, was not the brown wool gabardine suit, but the long, tiring flight from Mexico, where the president-elect had spent the day meeting with Mexican President Lopez Portillo.

Reagan dismissed his trip quickly saying it was "friendly" and the basis of establishing good relations with our Southern neighbors. And on to Howard.

"I know this is more of a non-partisan tribute for all the good things Howard has done while in the Senate," said Reagan. "But I'd like to be partisan for a minute. Howard is not only great as the leader of our party, but because he did more than any one human being could do for the election of others. And that's why he's majority leader right now, and not minority leader."

Baker, visibly tickled by Reagan's appearance, thanked the president-elect for himself and his wife, Joy, and called his rise to majority leader (Republicans are in the majority in the Senate this year for the first time since 1955) "the highest point in our political lives."

"I'm absolutely delighted in being in the majority," smiled Baker. "But before I spent all my time criticizing the Democrat's policies; now I'm spending all my time scratching and fighting to get the Cabinet nominees confirmed."

In addition to being the highlight of their political life, the event was also the bright spot of her month. Mrs. Baker has spent the past three weeks in the hospital for treatment of an ulcer condition and left for only a few hours yesterday for the senator's swearing in and the party. "That's my doctor right over there," she said proudly. "It was the only way they would let me come, and I wouldn't have missed this for anything."

Partisan differences seemed to be forgotten, at least for the night, as some 400 senators, congressmen, Carter administration officials and Cabinet secretary-designates filed into the stately Corcoran Gallery, where tables were set up in the main foyer.

Some even joked about their new status, or non-status.

"What are you going to do now?" Baker asked Carter press secretary Jody Powell.

"Well, I got a couple of very good offers to lay aluminum siding, but I haven't decided which one to take yet," said Powell wryly.

"You're doing just fine," said Baker sympathetically. "Gosh, just to survive all this."

Cavalier about his fate was former Carter campaign chieftain Bob Strauss. "Sometimes you gotta play the hand they deal you," he drawled. Strauss' hand won't be too bad as he rejoins his lucrative Dallas-based law firm, which also has a Washington office.

But despite a smattering of Democrats here and there, the night clearly belonged to the Republicans who hours earlier took over the U.S. Senate.



Tim Dillon for The Washington Star

Mayor Marion Barry and his wife, Effie, congratulate Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker.

Howard Baker Celebrates

Continued From C-1

"Well, I got through the day without kicking over a bucket of paint or anything," said Baker beaming. "But you know, even when I adjourned, I kept feeling like I forgot to say or do something. I guess I'll get used to it."

And Sen. Larry Pressler, R-S.D., just happened to be in the right place at the right time as the session opened. "I was the first Republican non-officer to preside over the Senate since 1955 because I was in Baker's office when we opened," said Pressler. "We (Republicans) are all on this euphoric trip right now, but

in two months the honeymoon will be over and then we get stuck with all the problems.

And politicians weren't the only stars in attendance. Actor James Mason and his wife Clarissa were seated at the two head tables, he with Times Mirror chairman Otis Chandler, Barbara Bush and Joy Baker; and she with Vice President-elect George Bush, Howard Baker and Sen. Paul Laxalt, R-Nev.

Mason sported a gold hanging "Snoopy" medallion on his ruffled tux because the cartoon character is of his "all-time favorite entertainers." He and Clarissa also enjoy the Muppets.

The Washington Post METRO

Monday, January 5, 1981

THE STEREOTYPE is that African art was never classical, that culturally it was barefoot, that the society was not technical, but primitive, and that Africa was a sleeping giant awakened only when explored from outside.

In recent years we've seen the grossest of these notions change — and the list of those who've helped us change them is long: art historians such as Frank Willett and Robert Thompson, Warren Robbins of the Museum of African Art, James Porter, Jeff Donaldson and his Lagos Festival and even Alex Haley and "Roots."

But some of the stereotypes still ride just below the surface of many consciousnesses, and if I close my eyes, I can see myself still — a young girl sitting in the Lyric theater in Louisville, eating buttered popcorn and washing it down with doses of negative cultural identity flickering on the screen before me. It was "Tarzan's Peril," with Tarzan battling warlike tribal leaders and cannibals.

DOROTHY GILLIAM

A Cultural Ray of Light On the 'Dark' Continent

Now I know deeply that the stereotype is false. Thanks to Nigeria's Ekpo Eyo and that country's strong antiquities program, what I saw then I no longer see.

What I've just seen at the Corcoran Gallery of Art here is a 2,000-year-old legacy that shows the continent too long dubbed "dark" actually aglow with a culture of a high order that surpasses in beauty and craftsmanship the greatest works of art.

Now I walk through and see terra cotta, glass, wood and bronze processes, and I ask myself what it means. It means distinct cultures like Nok; it means

the Igbo-Ukwu craftsmen who had by the 10th century A.D. produced virtuoso works using the lost-wax techniques of bronze casting. I see the magnificent Benin bronzes, and I ask myself what they mean. They mean the city-states of Ife and Benin whose courts required these spectacular works of sculpture and whose artists responded.

I see fragments that I realize are parts of human-sized sculptures, fragments of a culture that in a way glued society together. Through the art I reread the people. There is warmth, comfort, humanity, a beyond that speaks not only to lay people like me but to great artists like Matisse and Picasso.

It was a wonderfully "up" note on which to begin the new year, but I have to admit to flashes of anger, an outrage at the lies that we'd suffered when we should have exulted.

So there, Lord Clark! You know him, the British art historian whose name is synonymous with west-

ern civilization. In his acclaimed book, "Civilization," he compared the Greek sculpture, "Apollo of the Belvedere," to the African mask:

"Whatever its merits as a work of art, I don't think there is any doubt that the Apollo embodies a higher state of civilization than the mask. . . . To the Negro imagination it is a world of fear and darkness. . . . To the Hellenistic imagination it is a world of light and confidence in which the gods are like ourselves but only more beautiful."

Now I can reject this. Now I can see for myself ancient treasures that are not about fear and darkness. What I've seen are works that should jolt western art history's old prejudices about ancient Africa as dramatically as, say, Explorer, passing Saturn, changed our notions about the planet with its new information about Saturn's rings.

What causes these treasures to affect me so deeply? I'm a person of the '60s who's been aware of the need to create answers, a need created by the search for many others.

Amina Dickerson, education director of the Museum of African Art, has shared this search. She speaks of entering the Corcoran at the end of a crowded opening night reception. "There, all by myself, what those pieces communicated to me spiritually almost brought me to tears. There was a majesty."

The resident artist at my house excitedly described the exhibition as a "welcome historical triumph for mankind." And we both agreed it was an exhibit we want to share with our children. I hope Washington area schoolchildren will overrun the Corcoran Gallery for the duration of the show, which ends Jan. 31, for it is up to each generation to discover and assimilate its own truth.

All of this brought to mind the insight of a friend who saw the show in New York. He said it should prompt this nation to seriously nurture the descendants of these ancients who now live in America.

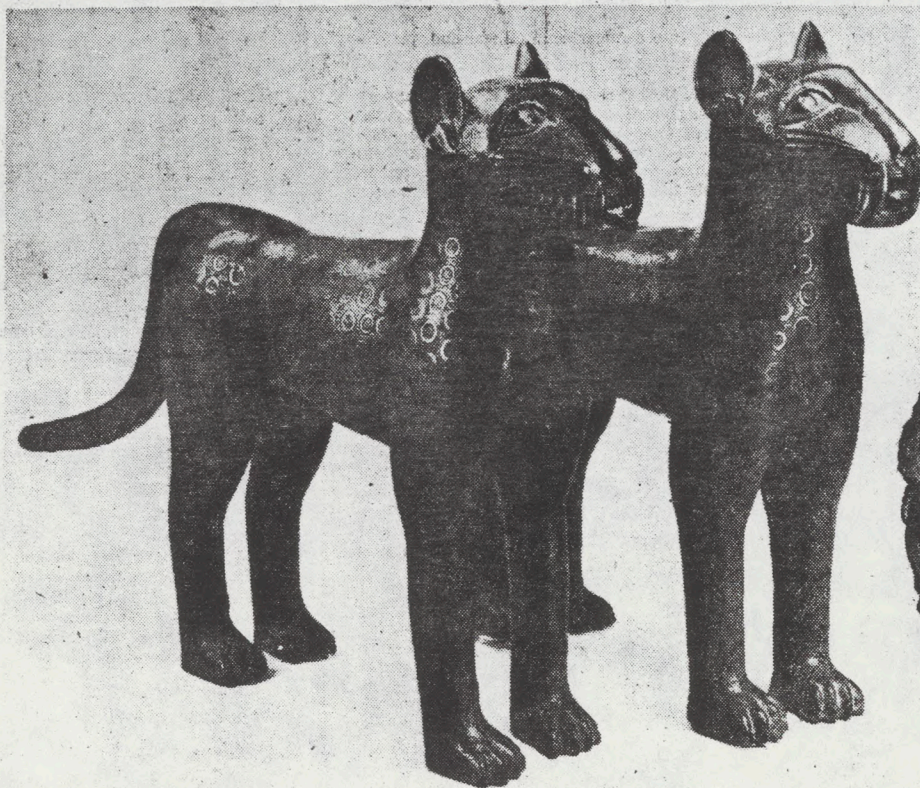
That's quite a leap — from the distant past to the present — but it is mind-boggling to consider what creativity could flourish if foresight rather than fear reigned.

THE WASHINGTON STAR

washington life

THURSDAY

DECEMBER 18, 1980



Pair of Leopards made of bronze and the Crowned head of an Oni of zinc and brass.

Nigeria's Mysterious Treasures



By Benjamin Forgey
Washington Star Staff Writer

Discovering the cultural glories so magnificently sampled in "Treasures of Ancient Nigeria," an exhibition of 100 art works that goes on view today at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, has until recently been a hit-and-miss affair.

Certainly, it got off to an ironic, inauspicious beginning in 1897 when British soldiers confiscated some 2,000 antiquities as part of the Punitive Expedition against the Benin Empire. This spelled doom for a 500-year tradition of art and, furthermore, it meant the dispersal of most of the Benin heritage. The British government sold most of the objects to help pay for the expedition.

In the past 40 years a few foresighted archeologists and art historians have collaborated to exhume from the Nigerian soil an awesomely impressive achievement spanning more than two millennia. In this effort they were aided not by fortuitous accidents.

The Mysteries of African Art

Continued From D-1

The startling richness of Ife art, which flowered some 800 to 500 years ago, was initially uncovered for the outside world by a German ethnologist who purchased a tremendous bronze head of a queen for 6 pounds, a bottle of scotch and a tumbler. The almost incredible intricacies of Igbo-Ukwu metal casting, dating to the 9th century, were first encountered by a man digging a backyard cistern in the remote Nigerian town of that name. In 1942 a clerk in a tin mine picked up a marvelous terracotta head and for a year used it as a scarecrow in his yam fields. This proved to be the missing link necessary to the identification of the Nok culture, which thrived on the Jos Plateau in central Nigeria between 2,500 and 1,800 years ago.

In more recent times these chance discoveries have been followed up systematically with the results that we see in this exhibition. Even though experts are still working to discover missing connections and trying to piece together the whole story behind the creation of these objects, their work has added immeasurably to our knowledge of African history.

The significance of their discoveries (and of this exhibition) is to erase forever certain widespread misconceptions concerning African history and art. Indeed, it is an important contribution simply to establish a historical context for research into African culture, which depends so heavily upon relatively recent artifacts made of wood. African sculpture, indisputably one of the great episodes in the history of religious art, is now seen to have a proud, ancient heritage.

For many years, too, it was fashionable in the West to "explain" the undeniable grandeur of the Benin bronzes by assuming it resulted from contact with European civilization, from which the African artisans were presumed to have acquired their subtle mastery of the craft of bronze casting. However, the very existence of the sophisticated castings of the Igbo-Ukwu culture, even as it raises intriguing new questions concerning the contact of sub-Saharan Africa with the rest of the world (because many of the alloys used had to have been imported), has at last repudiated this ethno-centric notion.

Installed chronologically, the exhibition is a head-spinning trip through time. Even the experts know very little about the society that produced the earliest works in the show, but in a sense the splendid terracotta heads of the Nok culture speak for themselves. Originally attached to terracotta bodies that have been lost, these elegant and intrinsically sculptural heads bespeak a culture of considerable sophistication.

The dates of the Nok culture are still uncertain. Ekpo Eyo, director of the National Museums of Nigeria, suggests in the catalogue that the objects may actually date back to 900 B.C. What is clear is that the culture was long-lived (for there is evidence of a decline in the

style) and that it didn't just spring up in a vacuum. Thus, one of the many important discoveries yet to be made in Nigeria is to uncover evidence of the tradition that led to the flowering of Nok culture.

Yet to be discovered as well is an explication for the remarkable appearance in the 9th century of the virtuoso bronzes of the Igbo-Ukwu culture. These ceremonial objects — vessels shaped like shells, snake-coiled ornaments for ritual staffs, elaborate pendants — are unlike anything else in the show. Distinguished by exceedingly complicated surface decorations, with abstract geometrical motifs combined with those taken from real life, these works are a far cry indeed from the noble solemnity of the bronze Ife heads that are next in the chronological line.

It is with these royal Ife sculptures, rare in their notable realism, that viewers can begin to see the continuity in Nigerian art. The Ife sculptures obviously influenced the clay sculpture of the slightly later Owo society, and the Owo pieces clearly form a link between the Ife and the achievements of the Benin empire.

And yet, the elegant stylization of the superb Benin bronzes — royal heads, free-standing guardian leopards, relief plaques in bronze depicting warriors, musicians, court attendants, ritual performers and so on — is altogether different from the realism of the Ife. Here, indeed, we can truly begin to sense a relationship to the vital, varied sculptural traditions of Nigeria that we know only by later examples executed in wood.

In his catalogue essay art historian Frank Willett points out a similarity in form between the eyes of modern Yoruba sculpture and that of the Nok culture heads, and he suggests the possibility that we are witnessing an artistic continuity of more than two and a half millennia.

Whether it proves out or not, this astonishing possibility is something to reckon with. It is exciting simply to realize that the tremendous story told in this exhibition is unfinished. Our knowledge of African art and history can only increase.

The exhibition consists entirely of examples loaned by the Nigerian national museums. It was organized by Dr. Eyo in cooperation with the Detroit Institute of Arts and its appearance in Washington is co-sponsored by the Corcoran and the Museum of African Art. The exhibition continues through Jan. 31.



Terracotta head



Plaque showing warrior and attendants



Vessel made of bronze

THE WASHINGTON STAR

November 8, 1980



The Washington Star / Ray Lustig

Christie's at the Corcoran

Richard P. Wunder, left, of Christie's examines art objects belonging to Daniel H. Garnick, right, of the District at a fund-raiser for the Corcoran Gallery of Art last night. Carol Brumbaugh, center, is chairman of the event which is open to the public today from 10-4 at the gallery. Appraisals of small or photographed objects (except coins, stamps, books or jewelry) will be made for \$6.

Fashion as 'Movable Sculpture' From a Washington Designer

By BARBARA GAMAREKIAN
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON — Maria da Conceição thinks of her hand-sewn gowns, layered dresses and heavy silk coats as "wearable art," and that is how they are seen by many.

The gowns are made from intricate, subtle designs that employ hand-sewn, hand-rolled silk chiffon ruffles cut from a complete circle, and yards of flawless tucks. Her dresses are in layers of bias-cut shades of purple and mauve or pale ivory, rose and apricot, and her black silk coats, almost nunlike in their severe tailoring, are rich and theatrical with vivid satin scallops falling down the back or with loops of silk braids that she fashions from silk and from metallic cords.

"Fashion is so temporary," she said. "When you grow up in a country like Portugal, fashion doesn't have a value in a way because it becomes outdated and is thrown away. I've never wanted to do fashion because I want everything I do to survive."

Her Own Advertisement

Miss Conceição, at the age of 34, is her own best advertisement. Always dressed in one of her own creations, and with her dark good looks and vivacious personality, she evokes many stares on the Washington social scene where she is a familiar figure.

"My work looks very bizarre as a composition," Miss Conceição explained, "but when it is worn it becomes alive. I want it to be like a walking tapestry or collage — like movable sculpture."

São — as she prefers to be known — was born in Evora, Portugal. Growing up in a convent, she was taught knitting, lace-making, embroidery and crocheting. It was when she moved to Denmark in 1964 that she began to study design and the fine arts, and her own creative style slowly emerged.

Most of her work during that period consisted of wall hangings and tapestries and the woven designs that she created for the Danish Handicraft Guild. But she was making her own clothes and friends began to ask her to

make clothes for them.

Settling in Washington in 1974 with her husband, Patrick Heininger, a lawyer for the World Bank, she taught one of the first courses on "wearable art" at the Smithsonian Institution. She has had more than 20 shows of her work in the Washington area and abroad, including exhibitions at the Smithsonian's Renwick Gallery and at the Vatican Museum in its American crafts exhibition.

She is currently preparing for a one-evening presentation of her work at Washington's Corcoran Gallery of Art on Oct. 24 and for an exhibition next April at the American Cultural Center in Paris that will subsequently be shown at the Museum of Art at the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence.

Her studio is the second floor of the Victorian brick home that she and her husband share just off Dupont Circle here. The sun streams through the lacy antique curtains of a studio that reveals much about how the designer and her lone assistant work.

Skins of wool, silk and cotton spill from baskets next to the hand-worked knitting machine; plumed antique dolls dressed in silk and feathers — their faces concealed by lace masks — hang from the ceiling (the smaller dolls may be worn about the neck, as São frequently does, as adornment for the dresses); draped on mannequins, strewn across chairs, suspended on hangers from the ceiling are embroidered jackets, flowing capes and skirts and knitted tops in various stages of completion. Valentina, a Burmese cat, prowls about, jumping delicately from the work table to an old-fashioned doll carriage piled high with fabrics.

Miss Conceição works from sketches, creates her own patterns and uses no synthetics. Except for machine-stitched seams, the work is done by hand, and the linings and underside of a garment are as flawless as the outer surface. The selvage of a seam, for instance, is covered with hand-sewn silk bias strips.

Her knit clothes, including body suits, have hand-crocheted hems and

edgings, and the knitted loops that overlap on the yoke of her jackets to form a woolly collage are hand knit and worked individually into the garment.

One jacket was made of 40 separate pieces. Holding up a silk cape shimmering with pleats, ruffles and metallic thread, she said, "Sixty hours of just gold stitching on this one, but that is what makes it unique. If you own it, you have it for the rest of your life. People don't need so many clothes, there is too much to buy in shops, too much."

She does most of the handwork herself. "People go to therapy and talk for hours," São said. "My studio is very peaceful and my work is my therapy."

In New York, her work can be seen at Julie: Artisans' Gallery, at 687 Madison Avenue, and in Washington at the Fendrick Gallery in Georgetown. Jackets sell from \$600 to \$1,700, depending on the intricacy of the design, and men's vests sell for \$450.

An Ensemble for \$2,000

Jim Henson, the creator of the Muppets, saw her work at the Fendrick Gallery and purchased a French silk ensemble, complete with a doll, for his wife. The price was \$2,000, and Mr. Henson plans to hang it in the couple's London living room as decorative piece when it is not being worn.

"I think it is sort of corny to talk about the important people who have bought my things," said Miss Conceição, "but I am really so happy when one of my friends saves and saves for months to buy one of my pieces."

A book on her work, "Wearable Art," has been published by Viking Press. It explains her techniques of combining appliqué, crochet and patchwork.

She is thinking of producing two or three of her designs in a numbered, limited edition, explaining, "It is the only way I will ever really make money." She is normally able to make between only 50 and 60 pieces a year and one or two major pieces a month.

"For me, nothing replaces making them," she said, her dark eyes aglow. "If it didn't sell, I would marry 10 men if necessary to support me so that I could work."



Maria da Conceição in her studio; left, one of her intricately designed dresses.

GALLERIES & MUSEUMS

Treasures at The Corcoran

BY ROBERT GALANO

Armand Hammer has done it again. Last year, the wealthy industrialist and art collector pledged more than \$1 million to the Corcoran Gallery to eliminate admission fees and to help with renovation of the building. Now he has outdone himself with "The Armand Hammer Collection," a traveling exhibit on view through November in the Corcoran's atrium galleries.

"My satisfaction in assembling this collection is complete only when I can bring it to others," writes Hammer in the handsome catalogue to this lush and lavish showing of masterworks from five centuries.

For its part, the Corcoran has responded with a fine installation in its skylit upper atrium: Soft, natural light cascades down cream-colored, uncrowded walls as the chronologically ordered display carries the viewer from room to room. (One gallery, artificially lit and carefully darkened, is reserved for some of the subtler drawings that don't hold up in the natural light.)

Of the hundred-odd works on display, most have not been seen before in Washington. Among the newcomers are two important paintings by Rembrandt van Rijn: "Juno," an oil-on-canvas portrait of the mythological queen of the gods, is considered by some to be the crown of the collection; and "Portrait of a Man Holding a Black Hat," a realistic oil on a wooden panel, probably depicts one of the artist's well-to-do patrons.

One of the show's earliest pieces is an elegant gouache on vellum done by Albrecht Durer in 1526 as part of a colorful series of botanical studies; with masterful attention to detail, Durer created a "Tuft of Cowslips" that shimmers with delicate hues of green and yellow. Other early items on view include a page of studies drawn by Leonardo da Vinci (circa 1470), two male nudes by Michelangelo (circa 1560) and a study for a fresco by Raphael (circa 1500).

Paintings from the 17th century include three oils by Peter Paul Rubens, "The Israelites Gathering Manna in the Desert" among them. From the 18th century, there are works by Fragonard and Goya.

Among the best works from the 19th century are John Singer Sargent's "Dr. Pozzi at Home," Gilbert Stuart's 1822 "Portrait of George Washington" and Mary Cassatt's delightful "Summertime," to note just a few. Andrew Wyeth's lovely watercolor impressions of "Brandywine Valley," Modigliani's "Woman of the People" and a pair of drawings by Picasso are among the 20th century's representatives.

Other artists represented in this important collection include Bonnard, Chagall, Corot, Cezanne, Degas, Eakins, Gauguin, Monet, Remington, Renoir, Seurat and Van Gogh.

FIVE CENTURIES OF MASTERPIECES — At the Corcoran Gallery of Art through November 30.



"Portrait of a Girl," an oil on canvas by Jean Baptiste Camille Corot, at the Corcoran through November.

October 1980

Smithsonian

By Frank Getlein

Armand Hammer and the remaking of an art collection

Ten years ago, his exhibit of great masters was called less than masterly; now born again, it is eminent and packed with prizes

We have it on Highest Authority that there is more joy in Heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 just people who need no repentance. That being so, it is reasonable to assume that in Art Heaven right now joy is unconfined. The reason is the scriptural one that the lost sheep has returned to the fold. In this case it is Armand Hammer and his born-again art collection, opening now at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington (October 4-November 30), then going to the Norton Gallery and School of Art, West Palm Beach, Florida (January 16-March 15, 1981).

For Hammer and for Washington, this is a return engagement, with a touch of the New York Mets climbing out of the cellar up to the rooftop. The last time "The Armand Hammer Collection" played Washington, ten years ago, it was a very different collection and was accorded a very different reception, namely hoots of derision. I myself was then art critic on the *Washington Star* and led the hoots. The *Washington Post* was equally unenchanted. There were, of course, some good things. But the overwhelming impression made by the show as a whole was that these were mostly pictures painted by the artist named on the label on a particularly bad day, or before he really became who he was, or after he had slipped into dotage. And there was a generous sprinkling of pictures that the late Daniel Catton Rich, who was director of the Art Institute of Chicago, used to call, generically, *The Dead Christ Supported by Attributions*.

The new Hammer Collection is now unencumbered



of all those Dead Christs. The just-out-of-focus paintings have gone, replaced by the genuine article, and the drawings are magnificent. All in all, the collection is museum-worthy and may well be the last substantial private collection to be amassed in the classical area.

How did this reformation come about?

The answer is in two words: John Walker.

At the time of that Washington exhibition, the spring of 1970, John Walker had quite recently achieved the status of director emeritus of the Na-



An outstanding American painter of the late 19th century, Mary Cassatt worked mainly in France. She turned out *Summertime* (1894) when at the height of her powers.

tional Gallery of Art after 30 years, as chief curator and later director, of helping to build that institution from the Mellon Collection of about 150 works of art to the truly world-rank collection it is. He had seen into their beginnings the splendid East Building, designed by I. M. Pei (SMITHSONIAN, June 1978), and the concomitant new venture into 20th-century art and especially 20th-century American art. He knew Armand Hammer casually, as a fellow trustee of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. He had noted

the arrival of the collection at the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History. He had read the notices and decided to skip the show.

Then he had lunch with an old friend, Sir John Foster, an English lawyer who managed the British legalities of Armand Hammer. Would Walker come and look? As a favor, Walker did, and expertly separated the sheep from the goats for Foster's instruction. Would he do the same for Hammer himself? No, Walker replied; he had spent his entire career *not*



Tuft of Cowslips, gouache on vellum (1526), is believed to be one of a series of plant studies

by the great Renaissance master Albrecht Dürer, though some experts question the attribution.

explaining to private collectors what was the matter with their taste and he was not going to start now. He summed up more brutally than the Washington papers had what was the matter with the show: bargain hunting as a principle of collecting.

Foster reported to Hammer. Hammer talked to Walker, who continued to refuse. Hammer appeared in Washington, cajoled and persuaded. Warning that he would almost certainly recommend getting rid of at least half of the collection, Walker undertook to write a detailed report, object by object, on what was bad, what good, what permissible in the collection. Somewhat to his surprise, Hammer accepted the report and followed the recommendations, not, Walker points out, 100 percent but certainly 90 percent. Stung by the Washington reviews, Hammer was determined, he says, to make his collection the best obtainable.

Walker went on to advise Hammer on new acquisitions, not to be found at bargain prices, and here on this new foundation the born-again collection rests. The attraction for Walker in taking on this enterprise, granted the conditions of his high standards, seems obvious: it was Trent's Last Case. Could Walker do it one more time? The answer is on the walls at the Corcoran. He could and did.

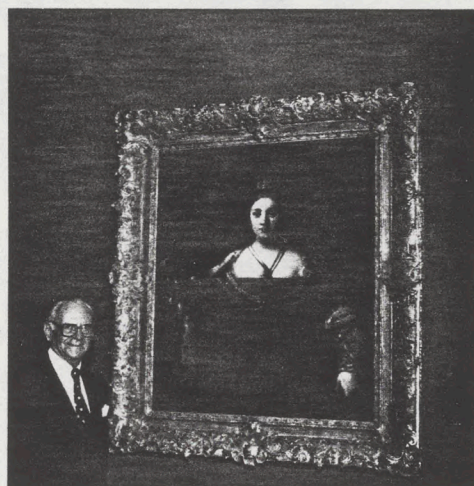
For Hammer the new direction must have been much more difficult. Exactly what Walker put his finger on in his tour of the 1970 collection had been for decades the lodestar of Armand Hammer's brilliantly successful career in international trading and in art, and the two have often coincided.

From Russia with know-how

Americans in general may think he's a brand of baking soda (in fact there is no relationship); the financial world thinks of him as Occidental Petroleum; the art world, until recently, thought of him for years as connected with the Hammer Galleries in New York, actually managed by his brother Victor.

The Hammer family, Russian in origin, started on the road to riches in Russia. That connection has contributed mightily to Armand's own rise. His great-grandfather, Vladimir, built ships for the Czar in the second quarter of the 19th century. Vladimir's son, Jacob, made a fortune in salt from the Caspian Sea. When that business was destroyed by floods, the family emigrated to New York, starting over but with a family tradition of trade and wealth. Jacob's son, Julius, began as a foundry worker, became a drug-gist's apprentice and then built up a chain of drug-stores in New York.

Armand was Julius' son and a medical student at Columbia when the family firm foundered and appeared headed for bankruptcy. Armand took it over,



The collector with his favorite painting, Rembrandt's *Juno as goddess of wealth*, painted in the early 1660s.

put sales into high gear, added surplus Army drugs from World War I and, by the time he had graduated from Columbia medical school in June 1921, had made his first million dollars.

Meanwhile, despite the family's past Czarist connections, Julius had followed his socialist inclinations into groups that were not yet the Communist Party in America but would become so. He also involved the family drug business in an export trade with nascent Soviet Russia. In the atmosphere of the "Red Scare" of the time, Julius was indicted, tried and convicted on what now seems a highly dubious manslaughter charge and sent to prison with a 15-year sentence. Against that immediate family background and despite an appointment as resident at Bellevue Hospital in New York City, Armand Hammer set out for Soviet Russia, bearing gifts in the form of a fully equipped field hospital.

He speedily gained the confidence of Lenin and of the trade officials who would survive the Stalin era. He found at once that the commissars were more interested in food than in medicine, in industrial development than in field hospitals. With the offer of a million bushels of wheat from America to combat famine, Armand Hammer was on his way to becoming a crucial actor in the developing trade between the

Art critic Frank Getlein comments on cultural affairs for public radio; he has just finished a book on the life and work of Mary Cassatt.

The born-again collection of Armand Hammer

Soviet Union and the capitalist world. He brought hundreds of Fordson tractors into Russia, thus being responsible for one of the great romantic themes of early Soviet movies. He started a pencil factory, essential to the most highly bureaucratic government the world had ever known. He and his brother Victor set up headquarters in the former Fabergé workshop and bought at distress prices the Fabergé and other luxury goods of the old regime. In a complicated deal that sold off the pencil factory to the state, the Hammers were allowed to bring out of Russia the Czarist art and artifacts they had accumulated.

After a faltering start, the brothers made a great success out of selling "The Treasures of the Romanovs" in American department stores, most notably Lord & Taylor in New York. A few years later, it was the Hammers who, naturally, arranged for the sale of the William Randolph Hearst collection at Gimbel's and Saks Fifth Avenue.

Armand went on to profit from every angle of a triangle of whiskey, surplus potatoes and oak staves for barrels, and from just about everything he turned his hand to, up to the pinnacle—so far—of Occidental Petroleum, which he led from its net worth of \$34,000 in 1957 to impressive sales of \$9.6 billion last year. More recently, he has entered into an agreement to build a fertilizer plant in Egypt which could have profound effects on that country's agriculture.

The Russian connection has remained alive. Hammer's trade activities are accompanied by cultural exchange and, sometimes, a kind of personal diplomacy.

So successful, indeed, has he been that he has aroused the suspicion of at least one scholar. In his basic book in the field, *Russian Art and American Money 1900-1940*, Robert C. Williams traces the Hammer history in meticulous detail and concludes, "There is far more evidence that the Hammers were



Watteau's *Couple Seated on a Bank* is a little idyll drawn in three chalks—red, black and white.

sellers of Russian art for the Soviet government during its great art sales of 1928 to 1933 than that they were private buyers of it while living in Russia. They had combined their family business with the Soviet government for years."

If it is so, it is a grievous fault only to those who believe that any contact between Americans and Soviet Russians, real or fiscal, is dangerous, that trade is treason. For persons with less rigorous views, the cultural exchanges promoted by Armand Hammer have been at least some theoretical help toward mutual understanding, and the trade ties have been useful because trade generally is useful, and because a fundamental principle of trade is "don't shoot the customers."

To Professor Williams' charges, Armand Hammer says forthrightly, "That's a lie," countercharges Williams with "poor research" and adds one of the all-time great understatements: "I've been a capitalist all my life." And, indeed, he may be the last capitalist in the Adam Smith sense, as distinguished from managers on the one hand, shareholders on the other.

If this collector, like so many through history, seems to require such apologia, the collection, as it now hangs, decidedly does not. It is not exactly "Five Centuries of Masterpieces," as the show is billed, but there are more than enough splendid paintings, some among them masterpieces, and there is a glorious run of drawings.

The drawings begin with Leonardo, Raphael and Michelangelo. Andrea del Sarto is represented by a sensitive black chalk drawing of a woman's head (opposite). Correggio and Tiepolo are also present. From the North there is a glowing Dürer gouache on vellum (although some experts contest it).

There are two Rembrandt oil portraits and the goddess Juno in regal panoply. The *Juno* is Hammer's personal pride (p.153), his favorite picture.

There is a pleasant Rubens painting of a young woman and a spectacular one of *The Israelites Gathering Manna in the Desert*. This was one of a series of *modelli* (full-color sketches) done for tapestries on the theme of the Eucharist. Another *modello* in the series, *The Meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek*, hangs in the National Gallery.

The center of gravity of the collection is French—18th through 20th centuries—and you could hardly find a better center in terms of old quality still available in the 1970s. There are some wonderful paintings.

There are also some odd ones, but not odd in the way things were a decade back. The Fragonard *Education of the Virgin* is a modestly lovely thing in itself, but it was painted when Fragonard was in his late teens, before his total immersion in the Roman scene, before his crucial discovery that his *métier* was not heavenly piety but earthly love.

There are several Corot oils that ten years ago seemed to enforce suspicion, since Corot is the artist said to have painted six or seven thousand works, of which ten thousand are in the United States. In the new context they look authentic. Three of them are superb examples. Most of the Impressionists and Post-impressionists are present, along with some of their non-card-carrying contemporaries. Of particular note are two Fantin-Latour bouquets, the van Gogh *Hospital at Saint-Rémy*, 1889, and from four years earlier, a quite remarkable oil of the landscape seen from his father's rectory garden at Nuenen, untypical in its golden browns beneath melting snow and white sky.

The premier painting by Vincent's sometime chum, Gauguin, gives you pause. Walker's demurrer, that Hammer took not 100 percent but 90 percent of the advice asked and given, comes to life with this picture, at least to the eye of this writer. In John Rewald's definitive book *Post-Impressionism: From van Gogh to Gauguin*, published by the Museum of Modern Art, a picture, *Bonjour, Monsieur Gauguin*, is listed as being in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, Prague. The Hammer Collection catalog includes a painting of the same subject as its own (p.158), and it acknowledges that the Prague picture is either a preliminary version or a later copy of the painting by the artist.

By the wildest kind of coincidence, I had been in Prague about six months before the 1970 opening of



Tenderly observed drawing of a female head in black chalk is by the Florentine master, Andrea del Sarto.



Superb in its own right, this pointillist drawing by Georges Seurat is after his painting *The Models*.

the Hammer Collection and had seen its picture. When confronted with the Hammer picture I felt instantly that *it* was the copy. The Prague picture seemed to me then and seems to me now very clearly the stronger of the two: everything in it is right, painted from life, the painter's imagination, and the instinct of homage to Courbet, who had painted a similar picture. The Hammer picture, to my eye, gives every evidence of having been painted from a picture, and that picture is the one in Prague. Against that, it is

fair to recall, I was seeing the Hammer picture in its context of "off-day," "bargain-hunting" pictures. My eyes are now 11 years away from Prague and I wouldn't dare to assert that one is the first and the other the later version. I only say what I remember.

Well, one who can and does is Armand Hammer himself. Realizing the doubts about his picture, Hammer packed the picture, himself, his wife and an art adviser into his personal jet, flew to Prague and, on a Sunday when the place was closed to the public,

John Singer Sargent's portrait, *Dr. Pozzi at Home*, is in his most dramatic and fluent bravura style.



This late work in the free-flowing manner of high Impressionism, Pissarro's *Boulevard Montmartre*,



got the Modern Museum opened. The two pictures were placed side-by-side and, according to Hammer, all agreed that his was the original. It may well be so.

In the 20th-century French department, there are a Rouault, a Modigliani, a Soutine and others. The standouts are two: a Vlaminck *Summer Bouquet* that has all the impasto verve and lights in deep space familiar in his landscapes; and a darkly golden *Nude against the Light* by Bonnard in which the curves of the standing figure are gently contained within the

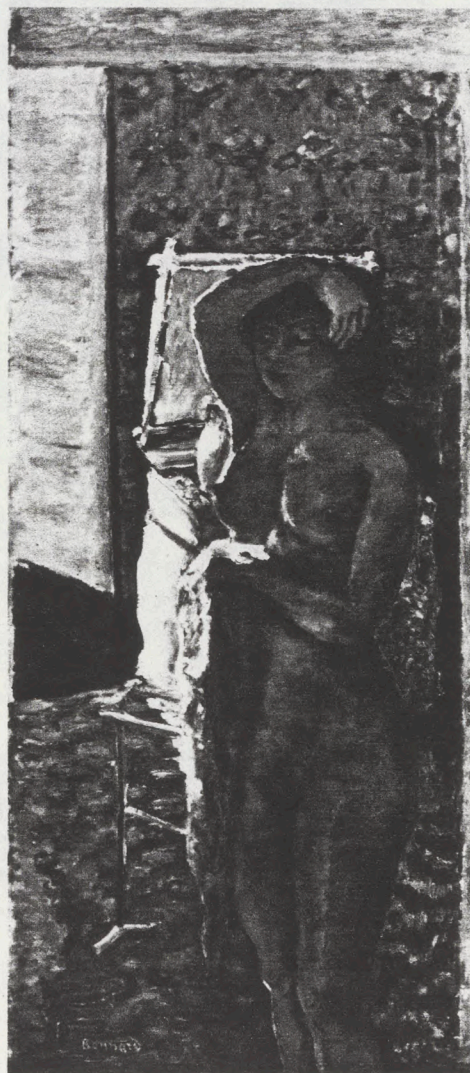
straight-line geometry of *toilette* furnishings. Bonnard's colors were never more complex and subtle.

The richness of the drawings delights time after time: a group of Fragonard domestic scenes done with affection, ease and perfect mastery; a Boucher of Venus reclining on a dolphin that is all the best of Boucher with none of the lubricity he frequently provided for an audience that wanted it; and, the peak of the 18th century in the collection, a Watteau in red, white and black chalk, *Couple Seated on a Bank* (p.154), that

Mardi Gras, 1897, is not in the Corcoran exhibit but was lent by Hammer to a major Pissarro show in England.



Powerful, yet intimate, *Nude against the Light* is an outstanding example of Pierre Bonnard's art.



The born-again collection of Armand Hammer

is a miracle of casual elegance in the drawing as in the figures themselves. In a 19th-century group that includes a pencil portrait by Ingres, studies by Cézanne, drawings by Gauguin from Tahiti and Brittany, the real prize is the Seurat study after the large painting, *The Models* (p.155), in which the central figure is isolated by a firm line from the background, with the dotted ghost of *La Grande Jatte* behind.

The Hammer Collection has few American works, but they are choice: an emblematic Stuart *Portrait of George Washington*, a fine Harnett still life (opposite), two Sargent portraits and an absolutely great Eakins portrait, *Sebastiano Cardinal Martinelli*, which the painter presented to Catholic University, which, inevitably, eventually, put it up for sale and placed John Walker in a rare conflict of interest. As a university trustee he urged the administration to keep it; as Hammer's adviser, he urged Hammer to buy it and Hammer did.

And there is a lovely Maurice Prendergast beach scene in his tapestry style. The knockout American work is Mary Cassatt's *Summertime* (pp.150-51), painted in 1894 when she was at the top of her form, an extremely rare landscape in which the paint strokes themselves echo and enhance the seasonal ease of the women on the water.

The new, cleaned-up Hammer Collection is a joy for three institutions as well as for the two men chiefly responsible. The paintings are designated for eventual gift—a process already begun—to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, a godsend after that museum lost its principal attraction, the Norton Simon Collection, which went to the Norton Simon Museum (SMITHSONIAN, September 1977). The Corcoran is exhibiting the Hammer Collection as only the latest in a series of benefits it has derived from the Hammer connection, one forged by Corcoran board president

David Lloyd Kreeger and a couple of his fellow trustees. Hammer has been a trustee of the Corcoran since November 1978. His most spectacular gift has been a \$900,000 grant to enable the gallery to drop its admission charges, an essential move in a city in which admission to most of the other great museums is free, thanks to federal funding. His most visible benefaction will be the refurbishing of the auditorium for \$250,000. His great Daumier collection, the heart of which was formerly the celebrated Longstreet Collection of lithographs and wood engravings, was shown at the Corcoran last year. (The Daumiers will go to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, further enriching that institution's collections.) Attendance, thanks surely in part to Hammer's gift to cover admissions, is now at its highest in the Corcoran's history. Hammer is accompanying the Corcoran to new achievement under its new director, Peter Marzio.

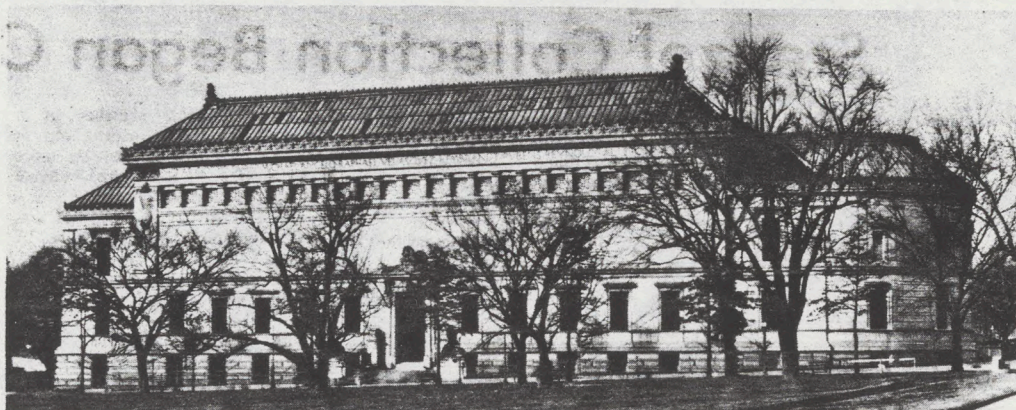
And John Walker? The drawings—the pure gold—are slated to go to the National Gallery of Art.



Hammer's *Bonjour, M. Gauguin* by Gauguin has an alter ego in Prague, but which is the original?

This still life is in the selectively precisionist style of Irish-American painter William Michael Harnett.





SEVENTEENTH STREET FACADE OF CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D.C.
Handsome Beaux Arts Building Was Constructed In 1897

Corcoran's New Director Enthusiastic

By HEIDI L. BERRY

Peter Marzio, the young director of Washington, D.C.'s oldest art museum, the Corcoran Gallery of Art, is making changes at that venerable institution.

In the two years since he

assumed his responsibilities, the Corcoran, which is housed in a handsome Beaux Arts building, has moved toward new financial, administrative and curatorial responsibilities.

Marzio came to the Corcoran from the Smithsonian Institution's Museum of History and Technology, where he was curator of prints. He holds a doctorate from the University of Chicago and has a broad background in American cultural history, acquired under the tutelage of former professors Daniel Boorstein, a past director of the Museum of History and Technology and now the Librarian of Congress, and

Joshua Taylor, director of the National Collection of Fine Arts.

Along with these impressive academic credentials, Marzio brings an enthusiasm for the Corcoran born of a sincere appreciation for the richness of the collection, which he refers to as "an embarrassment of artistic riches" in American portraiture, landscape and still life.

Additionally, he is motivated by a respect for private enterprise and a determination to compete favorably with the federal museums. In Washington, the Corcoran represents the private sector and is faced with the formidable task of measuring up to the standards of the federally funded museums.

Marzio is no stranger to competition. He entered college on an athletic scholarship and seems to find a challenge particularly appealing.

Among the challenges he and the Corcoran now face is the existence of both a school and a gallery in a historic building badly in need of repair. In addition, they are located in a city that lacks a corporate base and has a transient population.

Marzio has begun to tackle these formidable problems by utilizing business principles and applying marketing techniques to art. Attendance has tripled since the \$1.50 admission fee was dropped, making the Corcoran more accessible to a public accustomed to free entry to the Smithsonian complex.

By relocating the temporary exhibition galleries toward the back of the museum, Marzio has implemented another business principle. "If you go into a dime store or grocery store, where are the bathrooms, the telephone and the bread?" he asks. "It's all

Marzio Is Energetic Leader

(Continued from Page 10C) in the back of the store. They make you walk by all the other goods, with the notion that you'll pick something up. I believe that same theory works well in museums." To prove his point, Marzio noted that an extremely successful Honore Daumier show was "as far to the back of the gallery as you can get, and in the process of getting to it, people discovered the Clark collection," a major compo-

nent of the Corcoran's holdings.

Marzio's approach to art is suited to the role he now fills, as his interests lie in exploring the broad relationships between art and the democratic experience. "The non-fine art side of fine art is what really interests me," he says.

As a scholar, Marzio has explored some of these aspects of art in his writings. His most recent published example is "The Democratic

Experience: Pictures for a 19th-Century America, A History of Chromolithography."

Marzio's populist approach to art stems from his personal experience. "Art wasn't a natural part of the way I was raised. I never went to an art museum until I was a freshman in college." After he was introduced to art by a required humanities course, he went to the Frick Collection in New York and has pursued

the field ever since. And Marzio says he now has the opportunity to "enlighten and elevate public taste," a challenge which he finds fascinating, from an administrative level.

In addition, his administrative philosophy, "you get really good people and then you turn them loose," allows him to give independence to the curatorial staff headed by an exceptional associate director, Jane Livingston. This approach dovetails with the Corcoran's triangular framework, which also includes the dean of the art school, Peter Thomas.

All this has led to what is certainly a banner time for the Corcoran. International financier, art patron and new board member, Dr. Armand Hammer, gave the Corcoran a gift of more than \$1 million—a gift Marzio refers to as a "high-minded act of philanthropy."

And a \$200,000 federal grant, signed into law by President Carter, will add significant and essential funds to the museum. In addition, a successful Beaux Arts ball and an invitation from Rosalynn Carter to create ornaments for the White House Christmas tree brought both funds and recognition to the art school.

Marzio's most personal triumph was the bold deaccession of approximately 100



**PETER MARZIO, CORCORAN'S DIRECTOR
Is Changing Direction Of Washington Museum**

works from the gallery's European collection, an event which took place May 1979 at Sotheby Parke Bernet, New York. The sale resulted from a reassessment by the Corcoran of its identity, a study which reconfirmed its commitment to American art.

Proceeds from the sale, which netted the gallery more than \$660,000 (compared to a pre-sale estimate of \$400,000), have been set aside

in a special restricted fund, designated for the purchase of American art of historical importance.

If the immediate past points the way for the future, the outlook for both Marzio and the Corcoran seems bright. Marzio expressed his own goals saying, "Ideally it would be nice to be known as the city art museum that has a national and international reputation."



**MAIN STAIRCASE FROM FIRST FLOOR ATRIUM IN CORCORAN
The Museum Is A Privately Funded Institution In The Federal City**

NEW YORK

Art/John Ashbery

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

"... A pair of shows are part of a spate of events designed to celebrate Belgium's anniversary and make us Belgium-conscious ..."

CULTURALLY, BELGIUM OCCUPIES A POSITION in Europe not unlike that of Canada in the Western Hemisphere. When its citizens aren't arguing about which language to speak, they are trying to forget their love-hate relationship with their big neighbor to the south—that elephant in their bed, as Mr. Trudeau put it. I grew up within earshot of the CBC and noticed that its interviewers frequently asked foreign visitors, "Are you Canada-conscious?" It occurred to me then that we in the United States are in the privileged if dubious position of not having to ask such a question, and that even if it were askable we would rather not know the answer.

This thought was prompted by "Belgium Today," a spate of art exhibitions, concerts, films, theatrical performances, and lectures now taking place all over the country, intended to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Belgian independence and incidentally make us Belgium-conscious. Two events of particular interest are a show called **Belgian Art: 1880-1914** at the Brooklyn Museum and the first major retrospective of the abstract painter and sculptor Georges Vantongerloo at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C.

Of the mixed bag of *fin-de-siècle* Belgian artists at Brooklyn, only Ensor has a truly international reputation, though on the basis of the present evidence he is less deserving of it than several others. Indeed, the show is packed with fascinating little-known artists, and the lack of a single major talent is perhaps compensated for by an abundance of intriguing minor ones. It is a situation similar to that which Kafka describes in a passage in his diaries about "the literature of small peoples":

A literature not penetrated by a great talent has no gap through which the irrelevant might force its way. Its claim to attention thereby becomes more compelling The lack of irresistible national models keeps the completely untalented away from literature In a literature rich with great talents, such as the German is . . . the worst writers limit their imitation to what they find at home.



Compatible color: Combaz's poster *La Libre Esthétique*.

Thus, insularity was not the case in Belgium, where, beginning in 1884, a group of artists calling themselves Les XX (the Group of Twenty) established themselves as the vanguard. As such groups go it was unusual in its openness to varied tendencies both within and outside the country. During the decade of its existence (it was dissolved in 1893 and replaced by another movement, *La Libre Esthétique*, which lasted until 1914), it brought to Brussels the work of such foreigners as Seurat, Rodin, Whistler, Monet, and Sargent, some of whom left a lasting mark on Belgian art. Realism, Impressionism, Neo-Impressionism, Symbolism, and the various arts and crafts movements were taken up successively and sometimes showed up in the work of a single artist.

A singular phenomenon was the co-

existence of social realism and art-for-art's-sake symbolism (both aimed at the same bourgeois public), as in the work of François Maréchal. His drawing called *The Parasite* (an upper-class term for the unemployed) depicts a scowling misfit with his back to a shimmering nighttime view of the Meuse at Liège. It makes a powerful social point, yet in an etching called *Evening on the Quays* a figure with its back to the viewer stares across at almost the same scene: Here the mood is one of mystery. Likewise, there is a lingering surreal poetry in such overtly political paintings of Eugene Icarus as *Evening of the Strike* and *The Path*—the latter an unforgettable portrait of a peasant family lurking up a path that is the treadmill of life.

Seurat's *La Grande Jatte* and other pictures of his were shown at the Les XX exhibitions and made a tremendous impact, but his Belgian followers were no more successful than were Signac, Luce, and Cross in France at approximating anything more than the outward appearance of Seurat's work. One Belgian artist, Willy Finch, even "discovered," as Seurat had done, that a painted pointillist border around the canvas would protect the integrity of the painting from the wooden frame. Yet, if originality isn't essential, there is much pleasure to be had in the divisionist work of van de Velde, Georges Lemmen, and van Rysselberghe, particularly the last's dotted vignettes of picture-hatted ladies out on the lawn.

But the real interest of the show is its revelation of a handful of artists loosely grouped together as Symbolists. Besides

NEW YORK

the skulls and masks of Ensor and the even more macabre fancies of Félicien Rops, there are Mellery's chalk drawings and Spilliaert's watercolors of unpeopled rooms at night, where the furniture takes on a disconcerting presence of its own, and William Degouve de Nuncques's *The Pink House*, which anticipates by 50 years Magritte's nocturnal villas with a still-sunlit sky above. Fernand Khnopff's sphinxlike women are more self-consciously decadent, but a drawing of Bruges done from a childhood memory (he refused to return there in later life so as to keep these memories intact) is enchanting.

Some artists such as Finch and van de Velde eventually turned to architecture and the decorative arts in the belief that they could thus more successfully enrich the lives of their fellow citizens. The lively decorative-arts section ranges from such Art Nouveau extravaganzas as a labyrinthine candelabra by Dubois to the plainer if still eccentric suite of furniture for "an artisan's room" by Serrurier-Bovy. (Through June 29.)

THE CORCORAN GALLERY IN WASHINGTON has mounted the first major retrospective of the quasi-legendary **Georges Vantongerloo**, a founder with Mondrian and van Doesburg of *de Stijl* in Holland and later, with Marcel Herbin, of *Abstraction-Création* in Paris.

I was particularly taken with Vantongerloo's early (circa 1915) figurative paintings built up out of rectilinear dabs of color from an almost dry brush. The geometrical compositions of the twenties and thirties inevitably recall Mondrian, despite their frequent use of secondary rather than primary colors. But around 1937, when ellipses and curves—slim, colored eyelash shapes against an off-white ground—make their appearance, his art comes into its own. These sparse mathematical conceits, plotted from equations, have a lush asceticism suggestive of Webern's music. (Through June 17.)

The Washington Star

Sunday, April 20, 1980

ART

By Benjamin Forgey

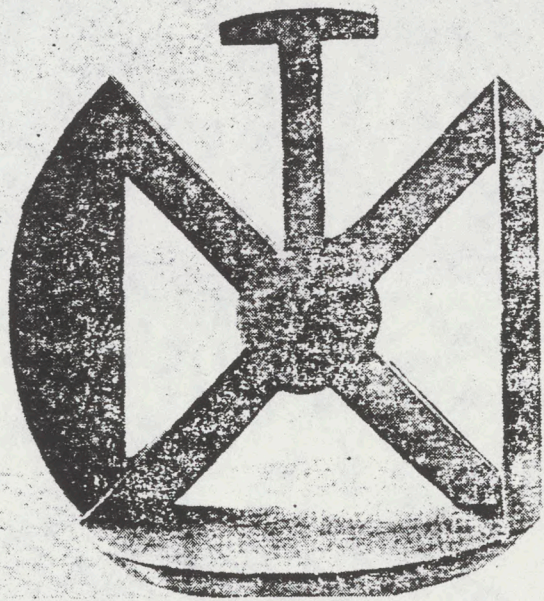
In celebration of 'Belgium Today,' a major Vantongerloo exhibit . . .

T.S. Eliot, among other thinkers, dwelled upon the ties that bind time past to time present, a point organizers of the Belgium Today symposium clearly kept in mind when they settled upon two of the major art exhibitions to be held in connection with the multi-faceted event honoring 150 years of Belgian independence. Their exhibition decisions: an impressive review of the lifework of Georges Vantongerloo opening Tuesday at the Corcoran Gallery of Art and a retrospective show of paintings by Leon Spilliaert that opened Friday at the Phillips Collection.

The Vantongerloo exhibition is a main event. The constructivist Vantongerloo (1886-1965) is a major, if underrated, figure in the art of our century. This show is the first comprehensive view of his work ever put together in the United States. The Spilliaert show constitutes an introduction to the work of an independent-minded Belgian symbolist painter who is almost totally unknown in this country (see accompanying story).

The reasons why Vantongerloo has not received more exposure and more credit remain somewhat mysterious. A lot of it obviously has to do with Vantongerloo's appealing but inordinate modesty (coupled with a steely self-confidence), which appears in both his life and work.

Vantongerloo, a rational visionary, clearly was not afraid of the consequences of his thought but for the most part he preferred to work upon an extremely modest scale, as if the thinking itself were more important than its physical manifestation in the work of art. In his life, even though he joined with other artists at two important junctures in history (the formation of the de Stijl movement in 1917 and of the Abstract-Creation group in Paris in 1931), this quiet Belgian preferred solitude and independence.



Sculpture from Vantongerloo's 1917 "Construction in a Sphere" series.

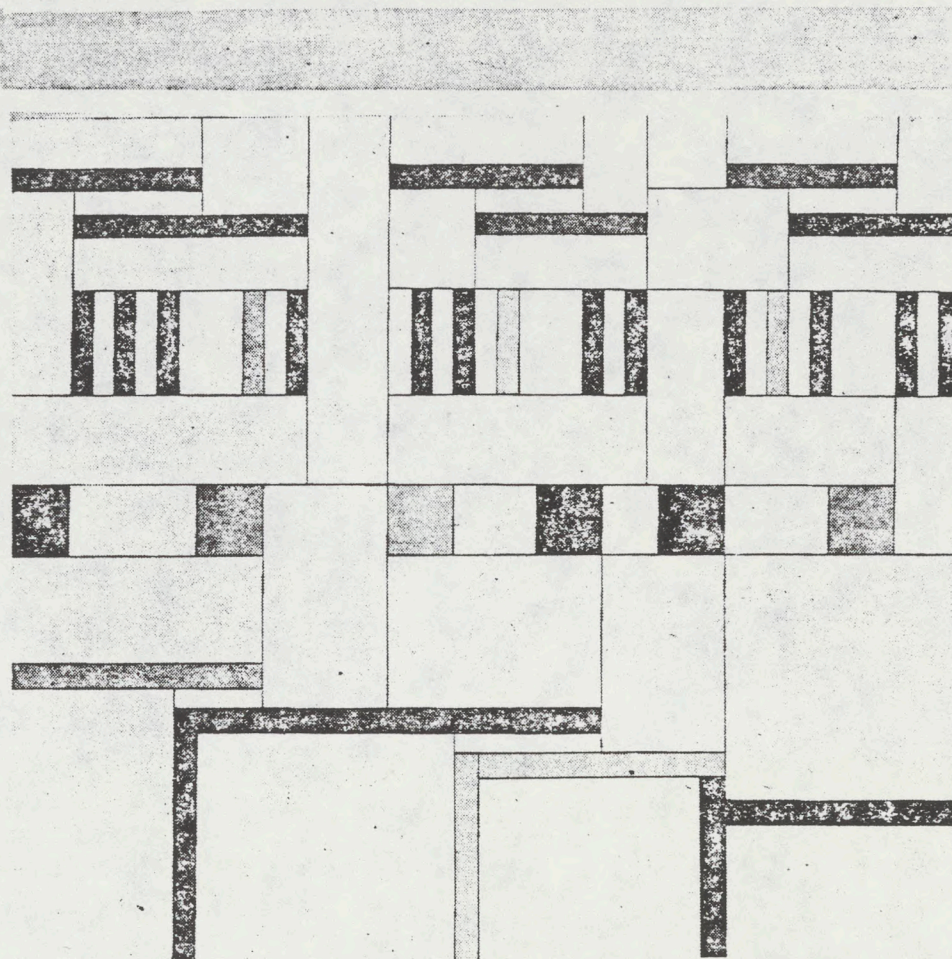
Indeed, he behaved very much like a solitary researcher whose place of work resembled an experimental laboratory as much as it did an artist's studio. "Take no notice of the harm others might wish you," he advised in 1961. "Have the urge for knowledge: it will support you, and know that one cannot have everything; in this way your life will have a meaning."

In the standard histories, Vantongerloo is mentioned primarily as a sculptor, although the present exhibition makes it clear that throughout his life he gave painting at least equal concentration, and that he was equally inspired in both endeavors. A second major point made by the show is that there is an

inner consistency to Vantongerloo's lifework, defined not so much by style — the look of his work in fact changed radically at least three times — as by his attitudes towards the process of making art.

Like just about everybody else, Vantongerloo began his art studies at conservative academies, specifically in Antwerp and Brussels. Although he belittled the idea of outside influences on his work, it is clear that the tremendous, widespread burst of creativity in Belgium and Holland during the first two decades of this century affected him profoundly.

In any case, as is made crystal clear in the first room of this chronologically-installed exhibition, Vantongerloo played an impor-



From the Corcoran's George Vantongerloo retrospective, "No. 114 Lignes — Intervalles," an oil on triplex.

tant part in one of the great cultural changes of history. Wounded early in World War I, he "retired" permanently to art. The early paintings in the show are delicate, beautiful figural paintings done in an airy divisionist style.

Then came the dramatic change from representational art to abstraction, which seems even more abrupt and thoroughgoing in Vantongerloo's case than in the more celebrated example of Piet Mondrian. In 1917, Vantongerloo began to make a series of beautiful little sculptures with the tersely descriptive title, "Construction in a Sphere." At about the same time, he began paintings that, like those of the other artists in the de Stijl group, consist entirely of right-angled planes of color with no reference points in the outside world.

Vantongerloo has written about the transformation: "... in 1914, I made a head of a child. Without my wanting it, the child became a pretext for my study of space. I wasn't satisfied with that work. Why not? Well, it took me years to realize that the subject 'child' is nothing but a parasite which by dominating space destroys the very notion of it." This is remarkably like the recollection of the Russian constructivist Casimir Malevich: "In 1913, trying desperately to liberate art from the ballast of the representational world, I sought refuge in the form of a square."

For a period of approximately 20 years following his initial discovery, Vantongerloo occupied himself with the elementary horizontal-vertical contrasts of Mondrian's neoplasticism, and he created many ex-

tremely beautiful, self-sufficient paintings in this style. Corcoran associate director Jane Livingston's careful, praising assessment of these paintings seems just right: "Certain paintings from this period nearly rival in conceptual stateliness and iconic beauty some of the great Mondrians."

However, the great variety of Vantongerloo's work in this vein is noteworthy. A guiding principle of both his work and Mondrian's was the idea of infinite extension into space, the concept of limitlessness which has important parallels in modern science. Unlike Mondrian, though, Vantongerloo saw no special spiritual qualities in the concept of the right angle. He was thus freer to experiment, often establishing mathematical models for the relations between the planes in his paintings

THE WASHINGTON STAR

and sculptures, and his work thus has more variety than that of the great Dutchman.

Then, too, when he had had enough of the right angle, Vantongerloo was free simply to discard it and move on. In the late 1930s, he began to incorporate curved lines into the schemes of his elegant pictures, gradually, in fact, abandoning straight lines altogether in both his painting and his sculpture. In the 1940s, he began to break his solid planes of color into delicate, discreet units, a step that had an enormous effect upon the look and feel of the works, making them ever less certain and less tangible.

These later works, both sculpture and painting, are a substantial achievement: subtle spirals and webs, concerned with a sort of breathing movement, quite dramatic at times but also extremely modest. Max Bill, the Swiss artist (and Vantongerloo's friend) who organized the show along with Livingston, described something of the peculiar combination of evenescence and hardness in these works when he said, "Vantongerloo in a sense produces new realities, reducing the

invisible by mental process to aesthetic facts."

The exhibition is supported by grants from the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities and the Atlantic Richfield foundation. After its Washington run, the exhibition will visit the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts and the Los Angeles County Museum, and then be seen in the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Brussels and other European museums. Its stay at the Corcoran continues through June 17.

The Washington Star

Black Artists — Vivid Scenes and Urban Images

By Benjamin Forgey
Washington Star Art Writer

Exhibitions of Afro-American art — lasting at least through the week and longer in most cases — have opened at the Corcoran Gallery of Art and 24 other Washington institutions, including commercial galleries.

Credit for stimulating the coordinated effort goes to the National Conference of Artists, an organization of black American artists, art teachers, arts administrators and other interested parties established 22 years ago.

The group convened its annual convention here today, and in honor of the occasion, Mayor Barry proclaimed this to be "Afro-American Visual Artists' Week."

The principal exhibitions are NCA invitational shows of 20 contemporary black artists at the Martin Luther King Library (901 G St. NW) and of five contemporary black women artists at the Washington Women's Arts Center (1821 Q St. NW), and a special exhibition honoring 10 outstanding artists at the Corcoran (17th St. and New York Ave. NW).

The Corcoran show, on view only through Sunday, provides historical focus for the whole endeavor. Each of the artists was born before 1920; each is still living, and each is represented by four examples of his or her work spanning styles and decades. (Also each of the 10 artists able to attend the conference was to be honored by President and Mrs. Carter and Joar Mondale this afternoon in a special ceremony at the White House.)

James Lesene Wells' black-and-white linocut print, "African Fantasy," dated 1928, is the earliest work in the show. All by itself, this crisply stylized image tells a story of the cultural energies involved in the Harlem Renaissance of the Jazz Age; in addition, it again establishes Wells' credentials as a leading innovator of black American art at the time.

The story of the following decade, one of sizable advances aesthetically and of considerable improvement in "political and economic development for African-American artists" (which, ironically, is the theme of the NCA convention this week), is amply told in a succession of images



"Picnic" by Archibald Motley Jr., whose work is seldom seen here.

by seven artists: a beautiful bronze head, "Black Madonna," by Richmond Barthe; excellent portraits by Charles White, Lois Maillou Jones, Hale Woodruff and Earnest Crichlow; and vivid genre scenes by Jacob Lawrence and Archibald Motley Jr. Seldom seen in Washington, Motley's paintings look very good in the context of this show and in the context of the Corcoran's American collection as a whole.

Romare Bearden's superb collages, depicting the complex rhythms of urban life, and Margaret Burroughs' convincing double portrait in bronze, both from the 1960s, bring things more or less up to date. Most of these artists continue to make art today; each fully deserves the honor of this exhibition.

The other 24 exhibitions promise a more comprehensive view of the energies alive among black American artists today. The NCA is sponsoring a bus tour of the exhibitions starting at the International Inn (Thomas Circle) at 9 a.m. on Saturday. Tickets at \$6 per person (plus \$4.50 for lunch at the Museum of African Art) may be purchased in advance at the hotel.

April 2, 1980

GALLERIES & MUSEUMS

Uncovering an Afro-American Treasure Trove

BY ROBERT GALANO

A display of paintings and sculptures by black men and women has a temporary home in the Corcoran Gallery's American collection. Beginning this Friday, "Ten Afro-American Artists" are celebrated in a retrospective of their works.

The 40-piece exhibit was planned by the National Conference of Artists, a cultural union dedicated to the support of Afro-American art. The works in the show were selected by Barbara Hudson, a curator and an organizer for the NCA.

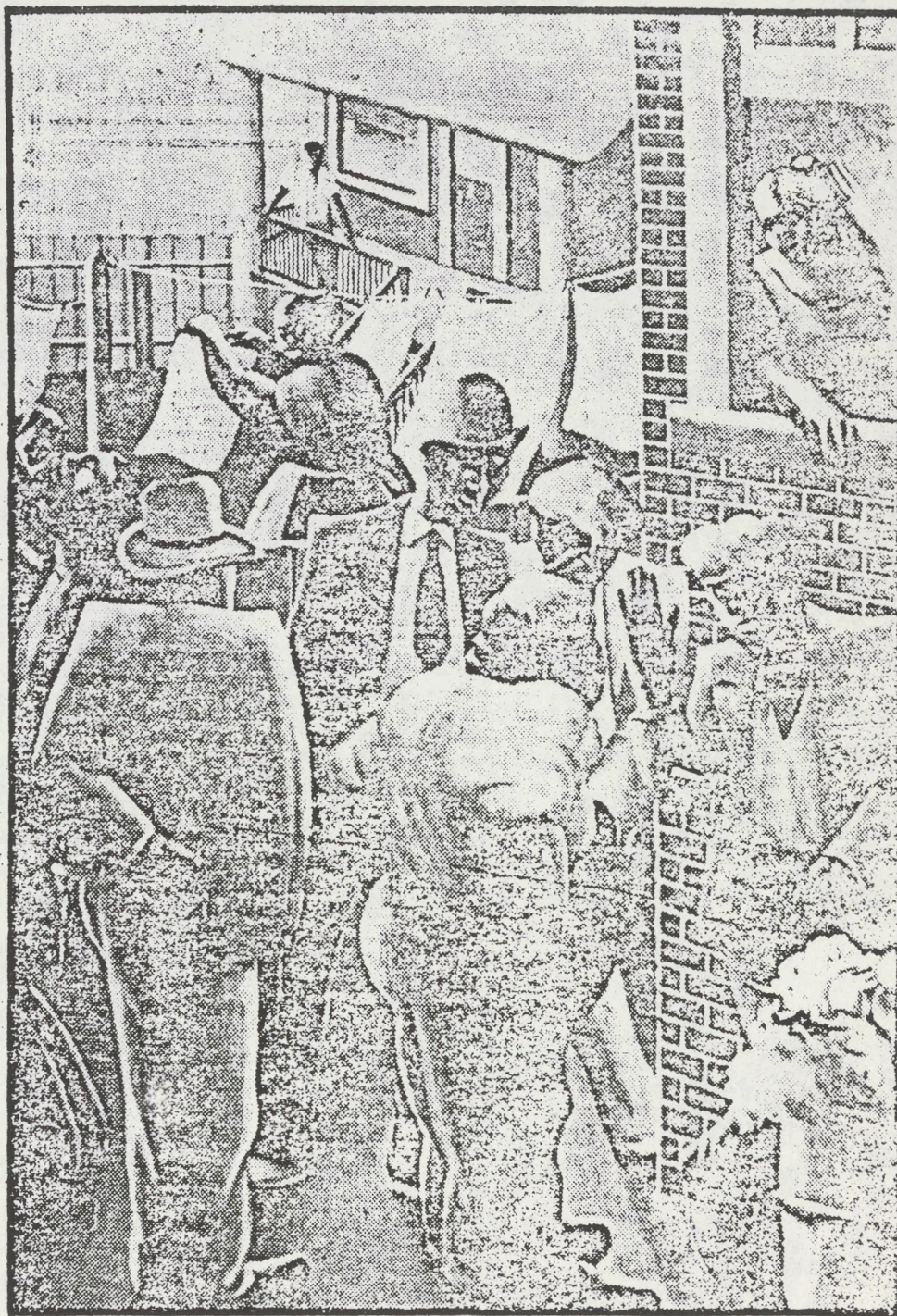
"The artists in our show are not as well-known as they should be," says Hudson. "We wanted this show at the Corcoran because we felt it was important that they be exhibited in a mainstream museum."

Though all 10 artists have worked and exhibited for many years, their names are not familiar: Richmond Barthe, Romare Bearden, Margaret T. Burroughs, Earnest Crichlow, Lois Mailou Jones, Jacob Lawrence, Archibald J. Motley Jr., James Lesene Wells, Charles White and Hale Woodruff. Their works were selected to show growth by the individual and to establish a reference point for future group showings of Afro-American art.

Most notable in this show are several genre works by Archibald Motley: "Paris Blues" (1929), "Picnic" (1936) and "The Argument" (1940) depict stylized slices of black urban life; his handsome and richly colored paintings are evocative of fine American folk art. Also noteworthy: Barthe's vivid and tangible sculptures; Bearden's abstract painting of a "Walk in Paradise Garden"; Woodruff's colorful, curious "Landscape With Star"; and Jones' portrait of "Jennie."

"Sam Gilliam and Lou Stovall aren't the only black artists," Hudson says, referring to a painter and a printmaker whose names and works are widely known. "I hope people come and feast their eyes and see what else is around."

TEN AFRO-AMERICAN ARTISTS, through April 6 at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, 17th Street and New York Avenue NW. Hours are 10 to 4:30 every day but Monday. Handicapped visitors may call in advance for special arrangements, if needed. Phone: 638-3211.



"THE ARGUMENT," ONE OF THE PAINTINGS BY ARCHIBALD MOTLEY JR. NOW ON DISPLAY IN THE CORCORAN.

The Washington Star

washington life

TUESDAY DECEMBER 11, 1979

Christmas Is Lovely As a Tree

The Christmas theme at the White House this year is simple and old-fashioned, with swags of greenery and bowls of evergreen and red berries everywhere.

Centered in the Blue Room is the 18-foot Douglas fir tree bedecked with a wonderful array of decorations made at the Corcoran School of Art.

The tree arrived at the White House Thursday. By the time Rosalynn Carter came home from a campaign trip Saturday, the volunteers had almost finished trimming it.

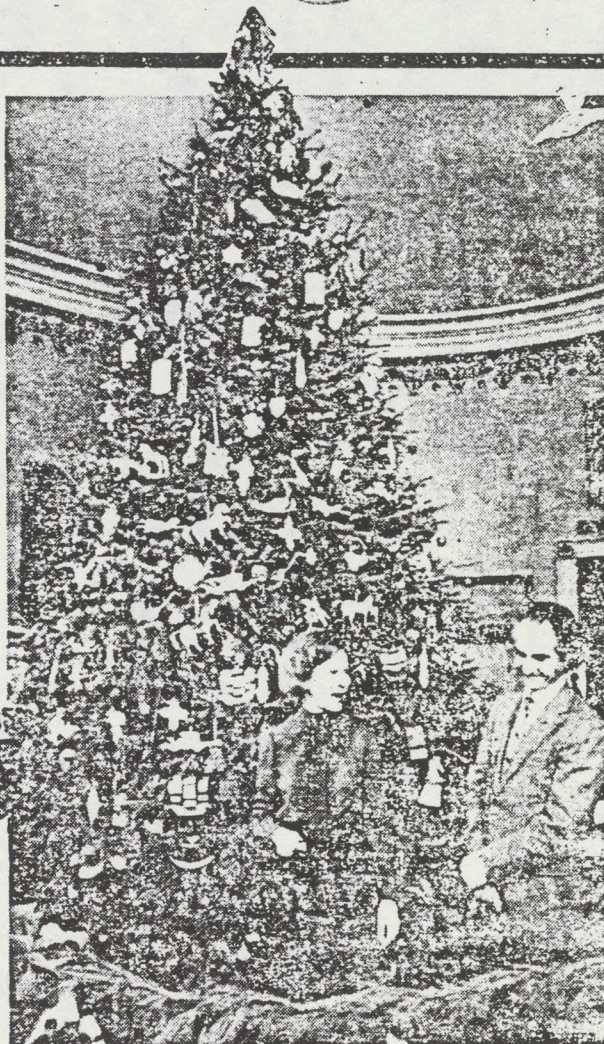
Mrs. Carter gave a tour of the tree yesterday, pointing out some of the 500 decorations . . . horses, flying angels, boats, posies of dried flowers . . . all made by Corcoran students during the last six weeks.

Around the base of the tree are ceramic sculpture "gifts," also made by Corcoran students . . . pink pottery ballet slippers peeping out of 'tissue paper' (so thin it looks real), a box of gold "peanuts" and many other sculptures, such as student Barry Mason's giant "nail clippers." Each is encased in a clear plastic box.

Despite the Iranian crisis, the traditional Christmas events at the White House will be held. "It's a time to thank God for the things we have," Rosalynn Carter said.

The White House decorations will be shared with several special groups of senior citizens, the mentally handicapped, White House staffers, congressional families, Secret Service and the press, and will also be seen on public tours Dec. 20-21 from 6 to 8 p.m.

— Joy Billington



Rosalynn Carter inspects the halls, after the Corcoran's Peter Thomas decked them.



— Washington Star Photographer Walter Oates

The New York Times

Art

"Power and pretension, with all their concomitant cruelties, remained the abiding targets of Daumier's wrath." (Hilton Kramer)



Daumier's "Through the Studios"—The artist included himself in this satire.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 28, 1979

ART VIEW

HILTON KRAMER

The Moral Thrusts of Daumier

WASHINGTON

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the death of Honoré Daumier (1808-79), the great French caricaturist, painter and sculptor, and to commemorate this event both the National Gallery of Art and the Corcoran Gallery have mounted sizable exhibitions of his work. At the National Gallery, the Dutch scholar Jan Rie Kist has organized a show consisting of some 100 prints, drawings, watercolors and sculpture. Much of it is based on the collection of the late Lessing J. Rosenwald, a benefactor and trustee of the National Gallery, but there are also important loans from other collections as well.

The Corcoran show, numbering 250 items, was originally organized for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art by Elizabeth Mongan and is drawn entirely from the immense Daumier collection acquired by Dr. Armand Hammer in 1976 from George Longstreet. To the Longstreet collection, which at the time of its purchase three years ago was the largest private collection of Daumiers in the country, Dr. Hammer has lately added several items of importance, including a painting, "The Lawyers," which once belonged to Corot. Both exhibitions are accompanied by excellent catalogues.

Daumier was undeniably a great artist, but he was quite unlike any other great artist of his time. He worked,

'As journalist-draftsman, Daumier delivered a prompt and unrevised response to the chicanery of politics and the vagaries of manners.'

for the most part, as a pictorial journalist, producing his copious prints at high speed for specific occasions. Even his sculpture was created for journalistic purposes — to be used as "models" for his own caricatures. Painting was an art he fitted into his busy life as best he could, whenever the pressure of deadlines and the need to collect a quick fee permitted.

This was undoubtedly a loss for painting, for his gifts in that medium were extraordinary. Yet, though we may regret that Daumier lacked the opportunity to pursue his painting with a freer hand, it is impossible to think of him as a failed or unfulfilled artist. As journalist-draftsman, forever obliged to deliver a prompt and unrevised response to the chicanery of politics and the vagaries of manners and morals, he was simply prodigious. He took up the new art of lithography, invented only a decade before his birth, and transformed it into the medium of a moralist. (He is said to have produced more than 4,000 images in this medium alone!) There was little in the public or private life of the society of his time that he failed to observe, and to render an acute — and often hilarious — judgment upon.

He was at once funny and dour, and completely without illusions. Power and pretension, with all their concomitant cruelties, remained the abiding targets of his wrath, yet there was something fundamentally modest — an essential decency and humanity — in both his personality and his style. One is never left with the feeling that the artist has excluded himself from his disabused account of the human comedy.

THE NEW YORK TIMES,

He certainly doesn't exclude himself from his own satire. One of Daumier's great satirical subjects is the world of art collecting, which, considering how few rewards it offered him in his lifetime, he had little reason to love or forgive. Yet in the print called "Through the Studios" (1862), which is reproduced on this page, the squinting, grey-haired figure with his nose all but abutting the canvas is none other than Daumier himself. It is no wonder that he was so much admired by his fellow artists. Copies of this print were owned by Courbet, Delacroix and van Gogh, and there is said to be a particularly fine impression of it in Cézanne's studio at Aix.

He was at his most ferocious, of course, in his political satires, and he very quickly got into trouble because of this. At the age of 23, more than a year after he produced his first print, he caused a sensation with a caricature of Louis Philippe, the so-called "citizen king," whom Daumier depicted as the figure of Gargantua, comfortably ensconced on a commode and gorging himself on gold pieces delivered from the poor. For this insult to power he was sentenced to six months in prison. But this experience was not, happily, much of an ordeal. His editor Charles Philippon soon joined him, and it was while serving out their respective terms that they planned a new paper, *Le Charivari*, which was soon to be the medium of a great many of Daumier's most famous images.

There is a good example of the "Gargantua" print in the Corcoran show. It is a youthful and derivative work — Jan Rie Kist suggests that it was probably based on a caricature of George IV by the British artist, Robert Seymour. But Daumier developed very quickly. His marvelous satire of the assembled Deputies entitled "The Legislative Belly" (1834), though not yet in his own mature style, is certainly a masterpiece. It was for the figures in this print, incidentally, that Daumier modeled his acerbic sculptural portraits, which he then used to draw from. These sculptures, originally modeled in clay, were posthumously cast in bronze. Everything that Daumier did is worth having, even in this altered form, but in my opinion the bronze portraits are no match for the power of the finished print.

By the end of the 1830's, Daumier had hit his stride in a graphic style unmistakably his own. There is less formality and finish to this style, and a notable increase in quickness and economy. The drawing fairly dances with movement and gesture, and the action is taut and the emotion intense. One scarcely needs recourse to titles or captions — which Daumier is believed not to have written himself anyway — to get the point. Communication is direct, and directly affecting.

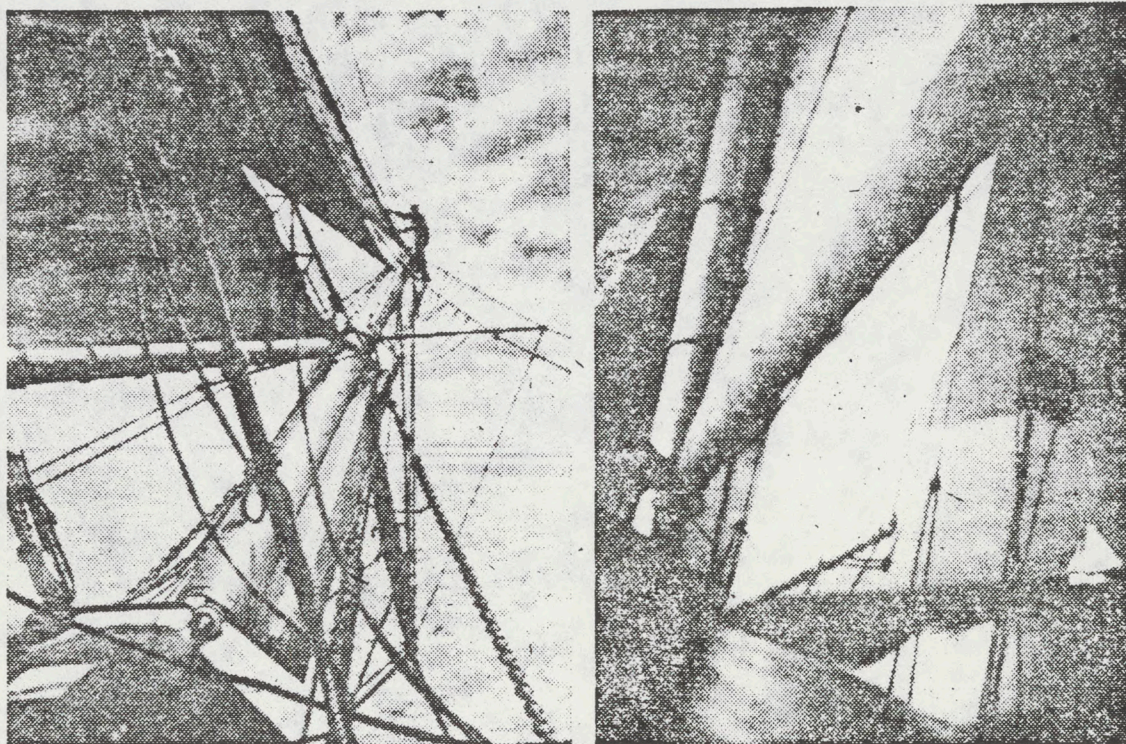
The sheer range of his interests, his ability to enter into so many spheres of experience and deal with them from the inside, never fails to amaze. I have already mentioned politicians and art collectors, and his series on the professional classes, especially lawyers and judges, is deservedly famous. But Daumier does not confine himself to the most obvious targets of satire. A pushy feminist author lording it over her male colleagues in the Bibliothèque Nationale is, for Daumier, as suitable a subject for satire as the drunkard making life miserable for his wife and family — though the latter is charged with a greater degree of moral outrage. His empathy as well as his sheer appetite for life are akin to Balzac's.

Working as he did, in what we should now call a mass medium, Daumier had no choice but to speak in his art in a language that was direct and quickly understood. He was, in this respect, quite the opposite of the avant-garde artist, and he was one of the last in the line of 19th-century geniuses in French art to speak with an authoritative public voice. It is there even in the great drawings that were never intended to serve a journalistic function. His art thus clearly belongs to a distant, almost unrecognizable age — to the period before the fall, as it were, when the fissure separating "advanced" art and public taste had not yet developed into the vast chasm it became in the later 19th and for much of the 20th century. Perhaps this, too, is one of the things that we find so moving in his prodigious output.

It is a pity that no New York Museum has seen fit to honor this great artist with a major exhibition on this occasion of the centenary of his death. But it is a pleasure to see that he has been paid proper tribute in Washington. The show at the National Gallery remains on view through Nov. 25, the Corcoran show through Dec. 18. And Daumier's memory has not been entirely forgotten even in New York, where the Weyhe Gallery, 795 Lexington Avenue at 62nd Street, has mounted a small exhibition to mark this anniversary.

Camera Notes

Corcoran to Show How U.S. Is Doing Photographically



A. Aubrey Bodine (left) and Karl Struss are on exhibition at the Kathleen Ewing Gallery.

By Harold Flecknoe
Washington Star Staff Writer

What is the present state of American photography?

Maybe we'll find out starting Oct. 13 when the Corcoran Gallery will open a major exhibition, "American Images: New Work by Twenty Contemporary Photographers."

It is being sponsored by the Bell Telephone System Companies, and after a stay of seven weeks, it will go on a tour of museums throughout the United States.

Bell says that the exhibition will "represent the range and insights of American photographers today."

Featured will be the works of Harry Callahan, Elliott Erwitt, Stephen Shore, Robert Adams, Lewis Baltz, William Clift, Linda Connor, Bevan Davies, Roy DeCarava, William Eggleston, Larry Fink, Frank Gohlke, John Gossage, Jonathan Green, Jan Groover, Mary Ellen Mark, Joel Meyerowitz, Rich-

ard Misrach, Nicholas Nixon and Tod Papageorge.

A number of them are well known to photographers who have gone beyond the amateur stage, but most are not exactly household names. However, Bell feels they are some of the most creative Americans working today.

Each photographer was commissioned to produce 15 photographs, 10 of which would be included in the exhibition. No artistic restrictions were set by the sponsor, the only stipulation being that the photographs be taken in the United States.

A hardcover book with the same title as the exhibition will be published by McGraw-Hill to coincide with the opening. It will contain 160 of the show's 200 photos, 56 in color. The Corcoran also will publish a catalog on the show.

September 9, 1979

NEWSWEEK

THE ART OF AMBUSH

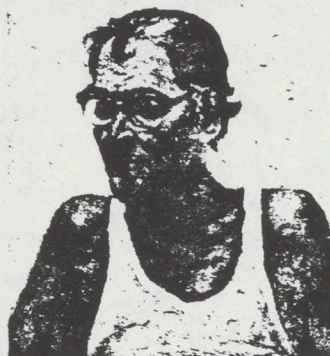
ART

NEWSWEEK In a self-portrait completed last year, Avigdor Arikha painted himself behind a canvas, at work. He is so absorbed with seeing—so stupid with revelation—that his mouth hangs ajar, forgotten, like a door in an abandoned house. He is pinned into a narrow vertical space; by contrast, the back of the canvas spreads out expansively. The brushstroke is everywhere intense, with some hint of desperation—tendrils of paint that seize and grip each inch of canvas, as if to say: "This, at least, is mine."

SENSIBILITY: The portrait is well built. The visual rhymes, for example, are both rich and meaningful: in the upper corner, the wedge of wood, while enhancing the work's feeling of compression, rhymes with the space behind Arikha's head. It rhymes also with the edges and catty-corners—and even with Arikha's nose. But it's not Arikha's talent alone that is compelling; talent is nothing much. What holds us is another thing, which is more rare: a sensibility of weight. In his work, talent combines with an art that, through many years of labor, seems shorn of

showiness and insincerity. In this self-portrait, Arikha wonderfully expresses what it is to try to see for yourself—he catches the awkward mix of pain, wonder, fear and gratitude.

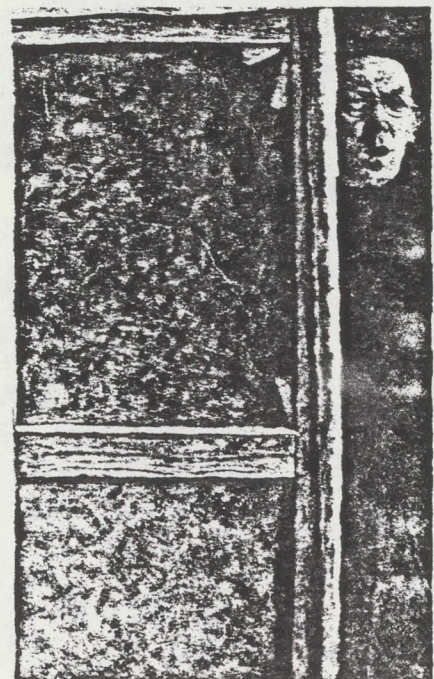
Twenty-one of Arikha's oils, mostly portraits and still lifes, have recently gone on display at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., in a show organized by Jane Livingston. Arikha, a 50-year-old Israeli who lives in Paris, is well known in Europe and Israel but has not often shown in this country. It's high time. His art is not beguiling; it's too keyed up for that. But it rewards long looking. Of those who still paint from life, Arikha is one of the few who, while not abandoning some older ways of paint-



'Dr. Spitzer': All bones and brains



'Asparagus': A splendid tension



'Self-portrait': Speaking in tongues

ing, remains tellingly modern.

Not many artists have had so difficult, or so modern, an education. Born in Romania, Arikha was deported to a Nazi concentration camp when he was a boy. He eventually escaped to a kibbutz in Israel and during that country's war of independence in 1948 he was critically wounded. ("In art," he says, "you must always be on alert, like an army.") He is deeply versed in art history, and has organized an exhibit on Poussin for the Louvre. This means he has not protected his own, more brooding art from the power of those classical artists, such as Poussin or Mondrian, who painted with magisterial certainty.

At the same time, Arikha knows very well, and at first hand, the devouring doubt of this century. He is a close personal friend of Samuel Beckett, whom he has portrayed many times; he knew Giacometti well, and once also sketched him. Those two artists, kindred spirits, have drawn from the mire monuments that are no less

daunting, in their way, than the classical art of Poussin. In short, Arikha bears the curse of knowingness. He is an intellectual who has not developed the protective blindness that most artists use to shield their own art. How does such an artist find a space of his own?

DEMON OF HISTORY: It has taken Arikha a long time. In the 1950s, like most ambitious artists, he painted abstract pictures, although he also drew from life on the side. In 1965, he stopped painting. He says that he saw his basic "form" recur in his abstractions—and "painting afterward was never a revelation and therefore not interesting." There followed a difficult period: for eight years, he only drew and made prints. Then, in 1973, he suddenly began to paint again—this time, from life.

Painting from life is one way to exorcise the demon of history, with its tyrannical parade of styles; it's Arikha's way to get around the "used up" feeling of modernism. His favorite artists are those who, like Caravaggio, escape the mannerism of their day—when painting is "painting from painting"—and turn with fresh conviction to the world. "Nature is infinite," he says. "It cannot be exhausted. You cannot put the mark of time on a great portrait."

Unlike an academic artist, who might think there is one best way to paint a nose, Arikha tries to paint each nose differently. Of course, no artist exactly captures the look of something. Nor can any artist, through a chair or a baguette of bread, exactly capture his own feelings. In the nature of his failure, however, he may find his own style: in the failure is the art and the man. Arikha has a complicated, but good way of describing why it is so difficult to paint from life. He says, "All that is visible around us is in itself inexpressible, whereas what's expressible is within us, in itself invisible."

A faith in "revelation" seems to be the

particular way Arikha has found to transcend his personal knowingness; through it, he has developed the faith to work when the mind doubts. He paints most of his pictures in a mad four or five hours. "If you know too much, it's like Lucifer," he says. "It's terrible. You can't go on." When Arikha's mouth hangs open, it suggests a scream, being struck dumb, or speaking in tongues—anything but rational consideration. But unlike the surrealists, who also sought to escape knowingness, Arikha never really seems to let go. He maintains control: the brushstroke is a visual vibrato.

EYE FOR CHARACTER: This is not a great era for portraiture, but it may not be as bad as many critics believe. Arikha is one reason. Critics have sometimes exaggerated his indifference to subject matter—and like many artists who paint from life today, he seems frightened of being mistaken for an illustrator. However, he has a keen eye for character (whether of an asparagus, the sole of a shoe or Beckett). He uses that eye. In his portrait "Dr. M. Spitzer on a Hot Day," two minds—the doctor's and Arikha's—seem to have met at the brush. As in most good portraits, the picture expresses both the portrayer and the portrayed.

Almost no artist uses color today like Arikha. He modulates and blends his hues to suggest the weight and density of an object, rather than building his pictures with primary and unmixed colors; his touch and handling of color are very fine. The way in which he has brought up the reds in Dr. Spitzer's face, for example, wonderfully suggests an old man in a hot room in Israel; in addition to the doctor's abstracted, thoughtful air, one also gets a raw, physical impression. He seems all bones and brains.

MEETING OF STYLES: Despite such old-fashioned ways with paint, which now look rather new, Arikha is not an ostrich who sticks his head into the hole of the past. His art could only be made now. In the self-portrait, for example, the concern for edges and open rectangular spaces owes something to Mondrian. He uses many formal methods to suggest the flatness of the canvas, which is also a central modernist preoccupation. He says, and this could be said of most modernists, "I reduce myself to the possibility of the brush."

For art historians, Arikha will be a slippery subject. The odd meeting of styles is part of the force of his work, however, helping to establish its splendid tension. By painting each nose differently, he also evokes the flux of the world; by seizing each inch of canvas, he suggests how hard it is to hold on to any belief. Arikha's is an art of ambush. The intellectual in him—the Poussin—carefully prepares the ground: bread on a table, perhaps, or a head in the mirror. Theories of action are discussed. Then the brigand in him attacks, bringing fresh surprise to the best-laid plans.

MARK STEVENS

The Washington Star



'Horseshoe Falls from Canada,' (1856) an oil sketch by Frederic E. Church.

Church's oil sketches at the Corcoran

By Benjamin Forgey
Washington Star Art Writer

In 1857, when Frederick E. Church painted his stupendous large view of Niagara Falls, a critic wrote that it was "incontestably the finest oil picture ever painted on this side of the Atlantic."

Church (1826-1900) was incontestably the most successful artist in mid-century America, critically acclaimed and financially rewarded. (The Niagara picture, now in the collection of the Corcoran Gallery of Art, brought \$10,000, at the time a record price for a living American artist.) He used his money to build Olana, the fairy-tale Victorian estate whose view of the Hudson River from atop a hill near Buffalo approximated the grandeur of the nature panoramas we find in his paintings.

Church was building upon the popular tradition of American landscape painting. What he added to it was his extraordinary skill as a painter, unmatched by any of his early contemporaries, and a devotion to spectacular and exotic natural vistas.

His best-known works, such as the Niagara, are big in size and effect — purple mountain majesty, carefully calculated and polished to a T. In these paintings transcendentalist reverence for nature was translated into paint with an operatic awe.

To make these grand paintings the artist traveled far, to Maine, Canada, South America, the Caribbean, Europe, the icy North Atlantic (but, oddly, not to the American West). On these trips, and closer to home, he made voluminous visual notes.

These sketches are the primary subject of a large exhibition currently on view at the Corcoran, a show of 112 works culled from the far larger collection of Church materials of the Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York. The show was organized by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service and selected by Theodore E. Stebbins Jr., curator of American painting at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

American landscape painters of the time believed in the necessity — indeed, in the virtue — of observing nature close at hand. Church, however, following in the tradition of the English painter John Constable and the French Barbizon painters, carried the idea of *plein-air* sketching farther than any of his American predecessors or contemporaries, particularly in his method of sketching at the scene directly in oil paints on paperboard.

It is clear that the artist himself, in the time-honored academic tradition, considered these works solely as preparatory materials for the finished paintings (completely made, of course, in the studio). Today, however, these sketches are of interest not only for what they reveal about Church's vision and working methods, but also for themselves.

Church's sketches reveal wider-ranging interests than we might expect. Although not a naturalist in the conventional sense, Church was interested in nature's fine points, and he produced numerous, fine, sketches of tree trunks, foliage and flowers. These paintings are of course dramatically different from his large, completed compositions.

Mainly, however, he used the oil sketches to test compositional ideas and combinations of color and light. In this sort of sketch, sometimes made in a half hour's time under the most trying conditions, Church knew what he was after, and you can almost feel the painter concentrating his skills upon the indelible (and usually quite dramatic) first impression.

These bravura sketches demonstrate what a fantastically skilled "hand" Church had, and they are succulently appealing on that basis alone.

Church was an exceptional artist with an irreparable fondness for the grand statement. This taste for the theatrically sublime was his strength and his weakness, and in some ways it is more palatable today in the fresh form of these incredibly quick little sketches than in the completed pictures.

The Corcoran has supplemented the Church exhibition with a display of pencil or watercolor sketches by other American landscapists of the period. This is an interesting show in itself and, by comparison, it does set off Church's unique flair. Both shows continue through Sept. 2.

The Washington Star

Saturday, May 5, 1979

Music: Soprano Margaret Willig

A capacity audience was on hand at the auditorium of the Corcoran Gallery last night to hear soprano Margaret Willig present a program of art songs, concert arias, and popular settings from the British Isles. Her recital, part of the Gallery's "Musical Evenings" series, had sold out the hall prior to concert time.

Willig, a product of Catholic University's opera workshop and former student of Todd Duncan, was joined by pianist Linda Hall and clarinetist Brian Hysong. The focal point of their program was a performance of Schubert's dramatic concert scene "Der Hirt auf dem Felsen" ("The Shepherd on the Rocks"), conveniently scored for piano, soprano, and clarinet obbligato.

Prior to the Schubert, Willig was heard in the recitative and concert aria "Misera, dove son? . . . Ah, non son io che parlo" of Mozart and in a selection of *lieder* by Robert Schu-

mann. Included in the Schumann were the celebrated settings of "Widmung" and "Schoene Wiege Meiner Leiden."

The final half of Willig's recital ranged further afield, to the contemporary "Three Dream Songs" of Joel Mandelbaum, followed by four folk-inspired settings of Sergei Rachmaninoff, including "To the Children" and "The Answer."

The New York-based Willig, currently a student of Alice Howland, concluded her program with lighter fare — the Scottish song "Annie Laurie," J. L. Molloy's "The Kerry Dance," a setting of the Irish "A Ballynure Ballad," and two popular settings by Benjamin Britten, "The Ash Grove" and "Oliver Cromwell."

A reception in the Corcoran's atrium followed the performance.

Theodore W. Libbey Jr.

Good-Natured Admissions at the Corcoran Ball

By Carla Hall

How exactly did it happen that billionaire philanthropist and arts patron Armand Hammer decided to give \$1.15 million to the Corcoran Gallery?

He explained. He was sitting at his first meeting of the Corcoran's board of directors—just after his election to the board a few months ago—when he turned to Corcoran president David Lloyd Kreeger.

"I said to him, 'David, what does the museum need most?'" Hammer related last night at the gallery's 24th Annual Ball.

"Well, with a big sigh, David said, 'We're not competitive with the other museums. We charge admission and most don't.' I said to him, 'What would it take to change that?' David answered, 'A \$75,000-a-year income.' I said, 'I think we can manage that.'"

Hammer laughed, recalling the conversation.

"Then, I said, 'Anything else you need?' And David said, 'Yes, the auditorium needs to be modernized.' I asked, 'How much will that take?' David said, 'A quarter of a million dollars.' I said, 'I think that can be corrected too.' And that's how we decided on the money."

Hammer laughed again. "I think it's more fun to give than to receive, don't you?"

The Corcoran Ball is one of Washington's premier annual balls, for which guests pay \$100 per ticket. Hammer beamed throughout the evening

as many came to thank him for the gift and gallery director Peter Marzio whisked him about for introductions. As of today the \$1.50 admission fee to the gallery is dropped.

"Several people came up to me this evening," said Kreeger, "and said 'Why did you make the free admission effective Saturday? Why not tonight, so we wouldn't have to pay \$100 to get in?' I told them, 'That's why.'"

About 1,100 people annually attend the ball, and all money is donated to the gallery and the Corcoran School of Art, according to the organizers of the ball.

Tickets are in such demand that a few people have to be turned away (balking a bit), according to organizers.

But one who chose not to come was Frank Stella, the acclaimed American artist whose work makes up the exhibit "Stella Since 1970," one of the two exhibits being previewed at the ball. The other is an exhibit of the work of late 19th-century French School artist Adolphe Monticelli.

"Stella doesn't like this sort of thing very much," one ball organizer said. "He came for the installation for the exhibit, and he'll be back for the official opening of the exhibit on Tuesday."

But it seemed everyone who came, ushered in by the pulsing beat of Brazilian street music (courtesy of local musician Bill Brown and friends who played during the cocktail hours), spent a giddy night hopping around from friend to friend.

The New York Times

ART VIEW

HILTON KRAMER

A Refuge From the Vexing 70's

Art

"It is no secret that many curators have been sorely disappointed with the 70's." (Hilton Kramer)



Roy Lichtenstein's "Reclining Nude"—"a gentle parody"

WASHINGTON
The 1970's are drawing to a close, and the inevitable lists, estimates, retrospects and general totting up of accomplishments that now come regularly at a decade's end will soon be upon us. What are we going to make of this curious decade? So far as painting and sculpture and the hybrid visual arts that derive from them are concerned, it is not going to be an easy period to summarize and define.

The reasons are no doubt many and complex, but one of them, surely, is that for many people who welcomed the 60's as the dawn of a new age — and I do not mean only those who were in their first youth at the time — the 70's have never succeeded in becoming fully real. For such people — and believe me, there are a great many of them in the art world of the 70's — the 60's remain a kind of cloister of the spirit. The humdrum world of the 70's may have brought them position, prosperity, power and influence — it is rather amazing,

SUNDAY, MARCH 25, 1979

ART VIEW

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, MARCH 25, 1979

A Refuge From The Vexing 70's

'For many people who welcomed the 60's
as the dawn of a new age, the 70's have
never succeeded in becoming fully real.'

when we stop to think about it, what a great school for worldly success the so-called counter-culture of the 60's turned out to be! — yet the present decade leaves them curiously indifferent. Their loyalties are elsewhere.

This is certainly the case with Jane Livingston, the respected associate director of the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., who has just organized that institution's 36th Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting (through April 8) in a way that effectively obliterates all significant trace of the 70's.

I do not mean this literally, of course. In actual fact, every one of the 30-odd works in the exhibition was executed in the past decade, most of them in the last two years. Yet in its fundamental spirit this is a show that steadfastly ignores the 70's, and takes refuge instead in a sort of dream version of a past (there is even a touch of the 50's in it) that is obviously very much preferred to the vexing and more variegated actualities of the present.

The entire show consists of the work of five famous painters — Willem de Kooning, Jasper Johns, Ellsworth Kelly, Roy Lichtenstein and Robert Rauschenberg. To impose upon the Corcoran Biennial such a severely delimited selection is, perhaps, a shade audacious. But it is also — as so many "audacious" acts in the art world nowadays are — utterly safe in its appeal to established reputations. If one had to draw up a list of the most widely exhibited, not to say overexposed, artists of the present age, these five painters would surely figure prominently among them.

For Miss Livingston, however, the five painters in question "represent a particularly rarified stratum of quality in their late work." Only two other painters — Robert Mother-

well and Frank Stella — were even considered for inclusion here, but they were dropped, she confides, "for simply practical reasons." Such is Miss Livingston's — and perforce, the Corcoran's — dour judgement on the painting of the 70's.

Needless to say, it is a judgement with which it is possible to disagree. But disagree or not, there is no real attempt here to come to terms with the 70's. The distinguishing feature of Miss Livingston's selection is its fond attachment to a taste that was definitively formed in the 60's and that, at least so far as painting is concerned, has remained immune to significant modification ever since.

Mr. de Kooning, the senior member of the favored quintet represented in the Biennial, has a place in that taste by virtue of his position as a veteran of the original New York School. It would be futile as well as cruel to dwell yet again on the faltering course of his recent painting. Suffice to say that the pictures Miss Livingston has gathered for our inspection in the Biennial do little to allay an impression of decline and disarray.

Of the others, it is Mr. Kelly who, though employing the most austere means, makes the strongest showing. On the walls containing his work are eight simple but elegant "cut-out" shapes — seven monochrome canvases (mostly grays and whites: Arp colors) and one made of Corten steel. Taken individually, I doubt they would retain quite the degree of visual power they generate as a group in this setting. But in the spacious, high-walled gallery they occupy on the Corcoran's second floor, they have something of the magic we respond to in the late cut-outs of Matisse.

The relation of Mr. Lichtenstein's art to his sources in earlier art is more direct, of course. As Miss Livingston observes in the catalogue, "The recent large-scale studio

not forthcoming with the anticipated promptitude — not, at least, in a form their sensibilities found congenial.

paintings draw quite exclusively upon art history, referring primarily to Léger, Matisse, Picasso, Miró, and Surrealism generally." The result is a succession of bright, cheerful, sociable paintings that are at once a gentle parody, an ingratiating form of homage to familiar pictorial experience, and a comfortable reminder that modernist painting may continue a while longer to live on its dwindling inheritance. Mr. Lichtenstein's are now the perfect paintings for tastes nurtured exclusively on the clichés of modernist painting, which they recycle with the requisite graphic vitality.

There is a good deal of recycling going on in the recent work of Messrs. Rauschenberg and Johns, too. The news about Mr. Rauschenberg from the Corcoran Biennial is that he has returned to using patchwork quilts. (Remember the "Bed" of 1953?) These quilts Mr. Rauschenberg now integrates into his usual collage-mix, and as is usually the case with his art, the result has an unfeigned decorative chic. But to ask us to believe that this is the best the 70's have to offer is really asking too much.

The news about Mr. Johns is that, according to Miss Livingston, he "seems

at the moment more closely allied with de Kooning than with Rauschenberg, closer to Braque than [to] Duchamp."

What this means, I suppose, is that Mr. Johns's work at the Corcoran consists of paintings on canvas without objects either attached or represented, and the paintings abound in displays of "painterly" texture. But without some object, or some image of an object, to function as a foil for this ostentatious display of painterly texture, there is little for the painterly impulse to accomplish. I would be the last to argue about a certain resemblance to Mr. de Kooning in this situation, but Braque's name had best be left out of the discussion since it belongs to a quite different universe of esthetic discourse.

This, then, is what the Corcoran Biennial offers us as "the best paintings of the time."

Well, it is no secret that many of the older and middle-generation curators of contemporary art have been sorely disappointed with the 1970's. The new movements, especially in painting, that events in the 50's and 60's had prepared them to expect were somehow

There was Realism, of course, and its allied modes of representationalism in painting, but Realism was precisely what these curators could not bring themselves to countenance. Realism had always stood — in their eyes, at least — for the counter-revolution. Realism was what they gave up an interest in when they took their professional vows, and its resurgence in the 70's has been a real nuisance to them — a sign of bad times. They might gingerly accept this or that manifestation at the fringe of the dread phenomenon — especially if, in either form or content, it was sufficiently attached to kitsch, and thus assimilable, even if distantly, to a taste formed on the conventions of Pop Art. But mainstream Realism remained — and remains — anathema. For certain curators to accept it, one sometimes feels, would be tantamount to accepting middle-age.

Since there is no way to organize an accurate survey of American painting in the 70's without taking Realism into account, the whole decade has had on this occasion to be shunted aside. This is an odd fate for a biennial exhibition of new painting, but only the latest of the oddities the 70's have brought us. ■

The Washington Post

Art by Committee At the Corcoran

By Paul Richard

Since its formation in 1953, the Women's Committee of the Corcoran Gallery of Art has raised more than \$200,000 for the museum and its art school. The committee also has given to the gallery, or bought for it, or pledged to it, more than 100 works of art. Forty-seven of these are now on view there in "The Women's Committee: 25 Years."

At first glimpse, this exhibition seems a mixed bag. On second glance, however, it outlines with precision the acquisition policies the museum has long followed.

Perhaps half the work displayed—a 19th-century Whistler etching, a 1915 portrait by William Merritt Chase, a small Paul Manship sculpture, an Adolph Gottlieb "Burst," and a fine Cubist bronze of a guitar player made by Jacques Lipchitz in 1918—contribute to the museum's survey of the history of American art.

Equally numerous are more recent works by local artists—Sam Gilliam, Jane Dow, Kevin MacDonald, Bob Stackhouse, Rockne Krebs, Gene Davis, Mark Leithauser, William Christenberry, Peter de Anna and Rebecca Davenport among them.

Well-known out-of-towners—Sol LeWitt, Helen Frankenthaler, Claes Oldenburg, Robert Rauschenberg, and John McLaughlin—also are represented.

Though many of these pieces—the LeWitt etching, the Oldenburg drawing, the Rauschenberg lithograph—



"Small Burst" by Adolph Gottlieb

are prints or minor studies, others—among them Davenport's self-portrait—show the artists at their best.

Shows selected by committee often appear ragged. This one should be judged by how much it contributes to the more orderly collections of the Corcoran. It will remain on view, upstairs in two of the rear galleries, through April 22.

March 22, 1979

Tuesday, March 6, 1979

'Object as Subject': In Praise of the Humble, Soothing Still Life

By Paul Richard

Let us praise the still life. Landscapes may be vaster and nudes, of course, are sexier, but the humble still life—of apples on a table or flowers in a vase—has virtues of its own.

What still lifes lack in grandeur they make up in sweetness. They are manageable pictures, restful and domestic. Even when painted in the most bravura manner, still lifes soothe the soul.

"The Object as Subject: American Still Lifes from the Corcoran Collection," on view through April 1 there, is a delightful picnic of a show.

Sunlight glints on silver in many of these paintings, dew drops bead fresh blossoms, a memory of ritual, a timeless sense of plenty, hovers round this show. Most still lifes suggest altars that serve spirits that are nourishing and kind.

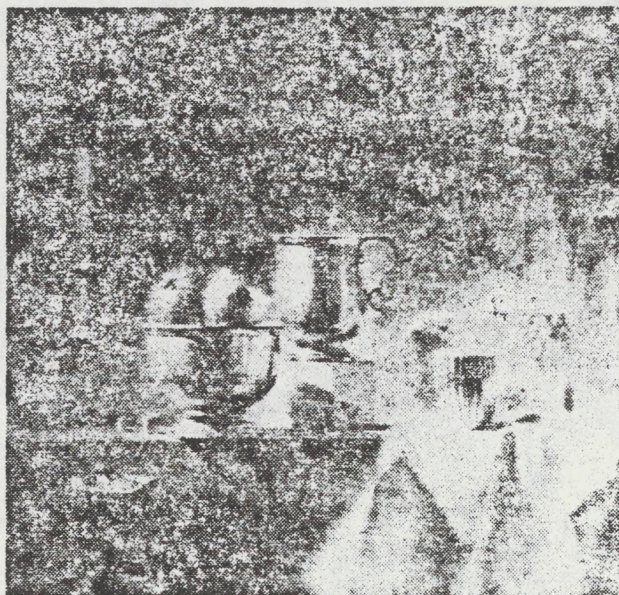
Although it is a survey—it opens with a Charles Bird King, circa 1815, and closes with a 1973 work by Washington's Franklin White—this teaching exhibition is not at all pedantic. The art of painting still lifes, like that of conversation, lends itself to wit.

The trompe l'oeil of Charles Bird King, for instance, is called "Poor Artist's Cupboard." There, beside his crust of bread and his glass of water, is a pair of well-thumbed volumes. One is called "Advantages of Poverty"; "Pleasures of Hope" is the title of the other.

The 1882 William Michael Harnett on display nearby is comparably amusing. Though a "trophy picture," it is less triumphant than sardonic. Instead of showing game, duck, a brace of pheasant, it portrays a freshly plucked rooster.

Something about still life is reassuringly familiar. We contemplate them every time we stare into a coffee cup, set the dinner table, or neaten up a desk. Still lifes, because still, permit profound examination. The cubists' absinthe glasses, the sunflowers of van Gogh and the apples of Cezanne, could be seen intensely because they did not move.

Warhol's soup can is a still life, so are the ashtrays heaped with "fag ends" modeled by Claes Oldenburg



"The Birthday" by Walter Murch

and the toothbrushes and lamp bulbs drawn by Jasper Johns. The genre is not new, it was old in olden Rome. The American tradition these artists are extending first flourished in the early 19th century in the Philadelphia of Charles Willson Peale.

James Peale, Charles Willson's brother, is represented here by a bowl of fruit, and pears and grapes, painted circa 1820. Though later still life painters often beautified their apples, James Peale did not hide their blemishes and spots.

Though their styles vary greatly, their subjects are so similar that the pictures on display here invite close comparison. How do Peale's pears differ from those painted by Severin Roesen? How do painters as diverse as John F. Francis, Walter Murch and William Merritt Chase depict the way light gleams on pewter, silver, brass?

Susan Rasmussen Goodman, the intern at the Corcoran who organized this show, has filled her lengthy labels with cross-references and anecdotes. We read that William Merritt Chase did not buy, but merely rented, that large English cod. The fish was fresh when painted, its thick lips are still moist, but one wonders what it smelled like when at last it was returned.

When Chase, who taught Charles Sheeler, visited the Armory Show in New York in 1913, he was so offended by the flower still life Sheeler had submitted that he broke off their friendship. Sheeler's lurid picture is included in this show.

So, too, are two father-and-son paintings by Emil and Dines Carlsen. Both of them are lovely. The son, Dines, painted "The Brass Kettle" when he was just 15.

Of the paintings on display here, there is none more haunting than "The Birthday," a still life done by Walter Murch in 1963. Though its surface brings to mind the messiest abstract expressionist paintings of the post-war New York School, the spirit of his picture is altogether different.

"The Birthday" is a painting in which chaos marries stillness. Murch's paint is dripped and splattered, but his glowing still life—of a candlestick, a bowl of fruit, a shining silver cup—remains a picture painted with immaculate precision. In some peculiar way this still life conquers time. It manages to link the sharply focused still lifes of the 17th century Dutch with the freely brushed abstractions of Willem de Kooning that are now on display in the Corcoran Biennial upstairs.

THE SUN

BALTIMORE

Art notes

Photos at the Corcoran are a feast for the eyes

By BARBARA GOLD

Anyone who writes about photography today does so with a great deal of temerity. Once again, an important field of culture seems to have been pre-empted by one of the most brilliant cultural critics working today. In the Sixties, Susan Sontag devastated devotees of esthetic criticism with her "Against Interpretation," a broadside directed against over-interpretation and distortion of art works.

Today, her "On Photography," a book with equal impact on how we look at important cultural artifacts, is on the best seller lists. She spoke recently at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington where "Photographs from the Collection of Samuel J. Wagstaff, Jr.," a New York art collector's 179 pictures by 86 photographers (through March 26), covers the history of photography. It is one of the best shows of photographs I have ever seen.

Ms. Sontag says photography has altered our reality; shaped, in fact, its own reality which supersedes whatever reality may actually have been. It is hard to challenge her ideas. We are so absorbed, she writes, in the world created by photography, by the endless series of images proliferating around, that we cannot get enough distance from that world to analyze it in any dispassionate fashion.

Mr. Wagstaff does not stop to discuss the issues. He is a collector first. He has helped make photography part of art to be collected, sold in galleries, exhibited just like more formal art works. His dedication has been long and intense, and his collection reveals just that.

No intrusive words

It is especially strong in French and English photography from 1850 to 1880, but almost every style and every major movement is represented, as are most of the famous photographers — Degas, Stieglitz, Frederick Evans, Walker Evans, Peter Emerson, Julia Margaret Cameron.

Ms. Sontag's book has a dearth of pic-

tures. Mr. Wagstaff's catalogue is all pictures. It is, in fact, one of the loveliest exhibition catalogues I have seen because it comes closer than most catalogues do to catching the essential feeling of the exhibition. Some of the photos are reproduced in their actual size. Others, of course, must differ. Words do not intrude. Captions explain the picture and its photographer. Introduction and text have been omitted. This is exactly what the cover announces, "A Book of Photographs," and it sets the proper tone for the show.

One of the problems with photography lately has been the over-intellectualization it has suffered. The catalogue and the exhibition refuse to indulge in that approach. This is a show for looking and looking alone. The large installation covers almost the Corcoran second floor.

Most of the pictures are in amazingly good condition. One of the pyramids seems to have every brick clearly delineated.

Some of the recent shots are exciting, but, despite their immediacy, they do not hold the attention half as much as the older photos. Two nudes by the French painter Edgar Degas confirm his noted fascination with light and contour and shape.

"Cowboy and Chuckwagon," a 1909 photo taken in Bonham, Texas, captures every romantic thought you ever had about the old West — and every detail of grass, gunbelt, trees and utensils is clear.

A Hopi Indian weaver contrasts with a shot of Princess Anita of Braganza, draped in pearls and silk, taken by Baron Adolf De Meyer in 1930.

Heinrich Kuhn shows a moody Edward Steichen, perhaps the founder of modern attitudes toward photography, and then switches from psychological insight to a startling composition of teacups and saucers that becomes almost abstract.

Cecil Beaton's classic 1932 photograph of Marlene Dietrich contrasts with Timothy O'Sullivan's particularly relevant "Savage Mine, Curtis Shaft," taken in Nevada in 1868. Marlene Dietrich stares

forth glamorously, every hair in place. The miners stand ready to descend into the shaft, bearded, dusty, determined to forge ahead with their work.

Every kind of photo is here — an arrangement of bananas in front of a black pot, three fish against a net, a Japanese fisherman trudging along the sand in grass raincoat.

The most fascinating photo in the group, however — for me, at least — is the October 3, 1862 photo of President Lincoln on the battlefield of Antietam. He stands with Major General McClelland and Allan Pinkerton, then chief of the Secret Service. Lincoln, slightly ruffled, wearing his famous stovepipe hat, stares slightly up into the distance. McClelland is at the side, smiling in an ingratiating fashion, waiting for the commander to make a decision. Pinkerton looks both threatening and dour as he squints toward something unknown.

The picture is posed. The attitudes are stiff. The three men would, obviously, rather be settling the affairs of the Civil War than having their pictures taken outside a laundry-draped pup tent. It is, however, a fascinating relic of its time.

The Wagstaff show resolves no profound photographic issues, provides no grist for any philosophical mills. It does demonstrate how one collector, who saw the market early, could build a collection, and it provides a feast for the eye. Maybe these pictures also establish our reality for us. Maybe they alter our reality, but analysis is, as you go through this show, something for another time.

Smithsonian

An all-star quintet from the 1960s, now 'old masters'

By Benjamin Forgey

*This year's Corcoran Biennial is slimmed
down to 30 works by a handful of major
artists working at the peak of their talent*

One of the most unusual things about the gallery opened in the nation's capital in 1874 by William Wilson Corcoran was its aim of "encouraging the American Genius." Corcoran, the self-made prominent citizen who amassed a fortune in the 1840s helping the federal government pay for the Mexican-American War, devoted the final decades of his long life (he died at 89 in 1888) to good living, philanthropy and art. The gallery that bore his name (now the Smithsonian's Renwick Gallery) was his favorite and probably most important good deed—although some might champion the Washington Monument, which he supported avidly, for that distinction. The Corcoran Gallery reflected his belief in American art at a time when most American millionaires were convinced that the word culture—if they thought of it at all—started with a capital E, for European.

Thus it was totally in keeping with the founder's ideas when the director and trustees of the gallery decided some years later (and from their present building, opened in 1897) to establish something called the Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Oil Painting. That was in 1906, when the American inferiority complex as defined, in this case, by European art was still running strong (some might say justifiably so, but that is another story). All that and, of course, much, much more has changed in the seven decades between the first Corcoran Biennial and the 36th, which goes on view February 24 through April 8.

W. W. Corcoran, and maybe even Teddy Roosevelt who, as President, attended the first opening, would have been surprised to take note of the progress made by the "American Genius" in this century, although it is hard to say what either would have made out of the specific twists and turns the national muse has taken to attain its current, proud stature in the world.

Of course, like any institution that lasts, the Biennial itself has changed some over the years. First to go, and it was no big thing, was the haughty insistence on oil paintings. Then came the demise of the system of juries and prizes, joint victims of the egalitarian urges of the 1960s and the tremendous rush of new art and

artists. Last came the matter of size. That first Biennial contained 397 reasonably representative of the painting at the time. Recent shows between 50 and 75 works. This one has

This has been the really fundame became increasingly apparent that a could no longer even pretend to cove ing, ever more diverse field of art. thing is that the Biennial did surviv for contemporary American paintin in the late Sixties and early Seventi about "painting is dead" reached a n crescendo before sliding into today' diminuendo. Painting has had to m space for some bright new kids on th alive and well and so, consequently exhibition designed to celebrate th making marks on a flat surface.

It was in just such a mood of cel say cerebation, that the Corcoran's a Jane Livingston, must have made her vative decision regarding the 36th Bi be, she told herself, the most honed c limited Biennial in the 72-year histe It would, in fact, consist of the very just five painters, five very famous, painters: Willem de Kooning, Rober Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein and l

Jane Livingston, 34, surveyed the hi asked herself: "Where is the *best* painti today?" And answered: "According to from the masters of the Sixties."

One might be tempted to argue the ly many will give in to the temptati wonder why so-and-so, equally famo mainstream, was not selected while so- it would be foolish disputation, like a dealer after everybody has agreed that is dealer's choice. In any case, Living makes a fascinating, short list on at le the similarities shared by the artists sh differences. Obviously, the more pron ity among these five painters has not their work, which is, in fact, extreme style and operating premises. Each o wealthy and busy and self-made.

Although only one of these painters was born in New York City, all are strc with that art metropolis, having fed tributed to its energy for years, and ended their greatest successes there. (I tion with the art capital was another of Livingston set when she was making iously, and perhaps not quite coinciden lowed a classic pattern on the way up: t years in provincial cities and towns (ever spent an important part of his life in O by eventual migration to New York : involvement with its art life, including artistic self-identity and recognition.

After success had arrived definitively, 1 of these painters felt the need to escape

bother of the Manhattan art world. To be sure, none of this group has severed connections with the New York marketplace (of ideas as well as objects), but each now lives and works in unostentatious isolation outside the city—Rauschenberg as far away as Captiva Island, in the Gulf of Mexico off Florida's southwest coast; Johns and Kelly in wooded country north of the city; de Kooning and Lichtenstein out in the Hamptons, those elegant Long Island towns that are like extensions of the New York art world.

Each of these artists needed, at a crucial midpoint in his career, both distance and space to carry out his work, for there is at least one other strong link connecting the five persons in this show, and that is a prolific and prodigious capacity for work. Livingston took a certain risk in this show in that when she started, more than a year ago, she didn't know precisely what the work would look like.

At 75, Willem de Kooning is the grand old master of this elite little group (and of many outside it), a European-born progenitor of the quantum leap that American painting took during the 1940s. Although he wasn't given a one-man show until 1948, when he was 44 years old and a fully mature painter, de Kooning became Mr. Painting during the 1950s, perhaps the most influential (and certainly the most imitated) member of that supertalented generation of painters grouped under the title of Abstract Expressionists.

In any case, de Kooning moved to East Hampton full-time in 1963 and his reputation went into something of an eclipse just as the other stars in this show were rising. It didn't matter, for de Kooning was beyond financial worries and he continued to paint with furious concentration and skill. The light and the color of the Hamptons much influenced his paintings, as well as an extraordinary series of small sculptures on such local themes as *The Clamdigger*, figures whose surfaces are so alive with the painter's touch that they seem only accidentally encased in bronze.

De Kooning, in 1975, began a series of paintings that are as abstract, as complex, as intense and as good as anything he had ever done. With these works de Kooning joined a very elite group of 20th-century masters, a little list headed by Henri Matisse, who were able to turn old age into a celebration of art and life.

The other painters in Livingston's show belong to a different generation, the one that succeeded the supremacy of the Abstract Expressionists. In fact, so different is their work that each seems almost to belong to a separate generation, in spite of the relative closeness of their ages (Johns, the youngest, is 49; Rauschenberg is 54; Kelly and Lichtenstein are 56).

Rauschenberg, the erstwhile enfant terrible of the New York School (ironically, one of his first works to earn notoriety was a de Kooning drawing that he erased, then signed and titled *Erased de Kooning Drawing*), was the first to emerge from obscurity.

He, too, suffered something of a fall from critical grace during the late 1960s and early 1970s, but he also continued to work at breakneck pace and with his customary effervescence. The big pieces of his in the Biennial (and all of the works in the show are big; de Kooning's paintings, more than six-and-a-half feet high, are relatively modest in this company) are wonderfully elegant concoctions called "spreads," collages that touch upon all of his major themes.

Benjamin Forgey, art and architecture critic for the Washington Star, wrote about the art of Isamu Noguchi in SMITHSONIAN, April 1978.

Johns, the reticent Southerner who was befriended by Rauschenberg when they both were outsiders in the early Fifties, catapulted to fame even more suddenly than his friend, and to an even more befuddled critical hostility (which changed soon enough to awed respect). Today it seems odd, however, that 20 years ago their works commonly were mistaken for each other's.

Nobody visiting the Biennial will make that mistake, for Johns' new paintings—dense accumulations of hand prints and hatch marks—are as weighted and closed as Rauschenberg's are light and open. Livingston is convinced that Johns' recent works are his best, particularly a little painting (at four-by-five feet the smallest thing in the show) titled *Usuyuki (Thin Snow)*, which carries a paradoxical sense of lyricism to Johns' customary dark, enigmatic, existential mood.

Lichtenstein was one of the original group of pop artists who, following leads established by Johns and Rauschenberg, brought back common, readable imagery to New York painting, albeit in a cool, ironical tone that seemed perfectly suited to the critical, and popular, ambience of the early Sixties.

From the distance of a decade and a half, the pop artists seem less and less like one another—indeed, this theme of individuation is a principal leitmotiv of Livingston's show. Lichtenstein's recent panel paintings clearly grow from the same hand and sensibility that excerpted comic-strip images and mass-reproductive techniques (such as the use for artistic purpose of the commercial lithographer's Benday dots) but they are much more complex. A brilliant, big painting such as *Razzmatazz*, for instance, refers not only to popular imagery but also to ancient and modern art, a sort of tour-de-force narrative assembling of images whose final meaning is ambiguous and disturbing despite (or perhaps because of) the crisp, clean style.

No "hard-edge" for Kelly

Another strain of Sixties cool is represented in the works of Ellsworth Kelly, except that he doesn't really fit that mold either. Kelly spent his crucial early years as an artist in Paris, and his particular brand of geometrical abstraction obviously owes something to European predecessors such as Mondrian and Max Bill, as well as to American conceptions of size and scale. Kelly's paintings at least seem as straightforward as his words. When asked by an interviewer once why he rejected the label, hard-edge painting (by now a dated label, to be sure), Kelly simply said, "Because I don't like most hard-edge painting."

He also said, "I think my paintings are easy to like, but you have to want to like them." Such swift, to-the-point observations are very much in keeping with the authoritative, radical elegance of the works he submitted to the Corcoran show—immense, titled shapes of monochromatic but luminous color, combining razor-fine straight edges with arcs. These paintings are clear, honest statements whose precision has less to do with mathematical or esthetic formulas than with intuitive grace.

One thing is certain, and it is that none of these paintings will ever look much better than at the Corcoran. It is a great paradox that the immense, sky-lit galleries of architect Ernest Flag's Beaux-Arts building, designed with turn-of-the-century academic work in mind, turned out to be absolutely spectacular showcases for modern art. The Corcoran is as fine a place as there is on Earth to celebrate the fact, and the act, of painting.

The Washington Post

STYLE

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1979

Corcoran's Biennial

... Focusing on Five



"They became 'Old Masters' young": Ellsworth Kelly, Jasper Johns, Willem de Kooning, Robert Rauschenberg and Roy Lichtenstein.

By Paul Richard

CONSIDER, for a moment, three Corcoran Biennial Exhibitions of Contemporary American Painting—those of 1907, 1971 and 1979.

The first of these was vast, chaotic, Frenchified. Power to the people, or, at least, to the painters, was a message of the next. The third—which opens here next week—will, despite the new work in it, have a conservative and classical retrospective mood. Corcoran Biennials are reflections of their time.

The very first Biennial, that of 1907, was a sort of Yankee version of the juried French salons. It was huge and hugely popular. President Roosevelt came to see it; so did 62,696 others. There were 288 painters in that vast, inclusive show.

Only 22 were represented in the Corcoran Biennial that Walter Hopps arranged in 1971. He did not pick them all. Some curators are tyrants, but autocratic gestures were in those days out of fashion, and Hopps chose to relinquish half his curatorial clout to the artists in his show. Each of the 11 he selected to participate in turn picked a peer.

This year's Corcoran Biennial, in contrast, will appear authoritative, classical, rigorously exclusive. Countless are the painters now working in America—but only five will show.

None is under 50. All are famous.

Willem de Kooning, Jasper Johns, Ellsworth Kelly, Roy Lichtenstein and Robert Rauschenberg—the participating painters selected by curator Jane Livingston—are acknowledged as Old Masters of post-war New York art.

Two years ago, four years ago and for many years before that Corcoran Biennials were, though not exclusively, surveys of fresh talent. Some pictures by big names were included in those shows, but they seemed to have been added for contrast and for balance.

All of the five artists in this year's exhibition have displayed their work in previous Biennials—de Kooning in 1951, 1961, 1963 and 1975; Johns in 1967; Kelly in 1963; Lichtenstein in 1965 and 1971, and Rauschenberg in 1959, 1963 and 1965. But these artists and their peers were usually outnumbered by others far less well known.

The curators responsible, Jane Livingston among them, who traveled round the country from studio to studio, sought the unfamiliar. They were scouting for the future. This year's show, in contrast, will use the present as a prism through which to view the past.

A tide may well have turned. "How on earth is anyone going to draw inspiration from the Future?" asked the incomparable Max Beerbohm half a century ago. "Let us spell it with a capital letter by all means. But don't let us expect it to give us anything in return. It can't, poor thing,

for the very good reason that it doesn't yet exist. . . . The past and the present—these are two useful and delightful things. I am sorry, but I am afraid there is no future for the Future." For the first time in a century, those who rule the art world, not all of them, but many, are beginning to agree.

It will be difficult to view the 30 paintings in this year's small Biennial in a state of mind that is not recollective. One cannot see new work by painters as familiar as de Kooning, Kelly, Johns, Lichtenstein and Rauschenberg, without thinking of the early work, the scary big-toothed women, the fields of flat color, the comic strips and flags and maps that earned these men their fame.

Sunday, February 18, 1979



Roy Lichtenstein's "Stepping Out" (1973).

Modern Art's Old Masters

BIENNIAL. From Ki

They became "Old Masters" young. "Twenty years ago," writes Livingston in her catalogue, many of the indisputably authoritative artists in New York were in their 20s and 30s; indeed it was artists of this younger generation who, in the late 1950s, were extending the modernist tradition more definitively than their American elders... To organize an exhibition of first rank 'new American painting' at any moment between, say, 1958 and 1970 meant to include at least a dozen artists under 35." For reasons still mysterious that no longer seems the case.

The triumph of abstract expressionism made de Kooning's name a household word. Pop art did the same for Lichtenstein and Johns. But few young artists nowadays seem to surf to fame on waves of innovation. The young painters of the '70s no doubt are as gifted, as ambitious and hard-working, as those of the '50s and the early '60s; but despite their efforts, their talents and their numbers, few of them have reached the status of Art Stars. Many of them feel that the stage door has slammed shut.

It seems to be far harder now to build an art world reputation than it was, say, 10 or 20 years ago. Who are the acknowledged American Art Stars of the '70s? A few names spring to mind—Frank Stella, Richard Estes, Andy Warhol, Kenneth Noland, Christo, Sol LeWitt—but like the five men in this show, they began to earn their reputations before the start of the decade.

A similar situation seems to hold in Washington. There were major reputations made here in the '50s and the '60s—among them Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland and Gene Davis. For a while it appeared a younger generation was nipping at their heels. One thinks of Rockne Krebs, Sam Gilliam and Ed McGowin—but those three barely made it. Few local artists since then have achieved such fame.

When Livingston decided to restrict this year's Biennial to modern art's Old Masters, she was a bit surprised at how few names came to mind. She considered Phillip Guston, Agnes Martin, Helen Frankenthaler, Warhol, but then decided no. She thought of Frank Stella, but an exhibit of his recent work will go on display at the Corcoran in April. She consid-

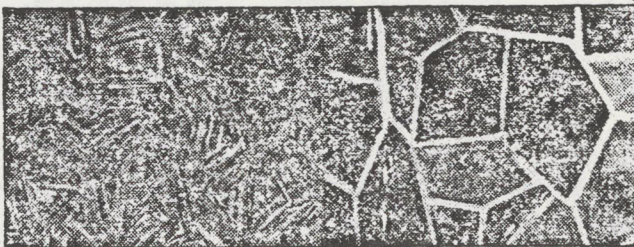
ered Robert Motherwell, but he was represented well in the National Gallery's East Building. "I wanted to limit the exhibition to artists who had demonstrated, over time, a profound commitment to painting at the highest level. At first I thought of adding a few lesser figures, but instead I decided to make the exhibition maximally legible, maximally lucid. I did not want a mixed bag."

Artists, unlike athletes, need not decay with age. "Almost by definition, master painters improve as they grow older," observes Livingston. She contends the five painters in her show "are not only continuing to produce paintings in a spirit of refinement and elaboration of their own earlier achievements, but are making bodies of work which almost exceed in mastery, ambitiousness and sophistication much of their own earlier output. They are, in a word, holding their own against any possible incursion either of mimetic or iconoclastic talent from the new generation." Her show will let us see whether these five artists are worthy of such praise.

There is, as we all know, something self-perpetuating about great reputations. Are the artists in this show famous for their recent work—or just for being famous? Roy Lichtenstein still paints paintings that knowingly discuss the history of painting. Kelly still produces handsome panels of uninflected color. Rauschenberg is still as theatrical as ever, and de Kooning, 75 now, is still an action painter—but would they have been asked to show if they, instead, had broken completely with their past?

Americans need stars. And we tend to be comforted when things that used to shock us become pleasingly familiar. The five artists picked by Livingston for this year's Biennial were once considered radicals, but that is true no longer. We recognize them now as hard-working conservatives. The loyalty they've shown to their early innovations has reinforced their fame.

The show should be a hit. De Kooning, Kelly, Lichtenstein, Johns and Rauschenberg are expected for the opening. "Umpteen dinner parties have been planned for the opening," says Livingston. "Everyone wants a piece of the action." Grants to the Corcoran from the Calfritz Foundation, Mobil and the National Endowment for the Arts will pay the exhibition's bills. "I wish that raising money would always be as easy as it has been for this show," said Peter Marzio, the Corcoran's director. The 36th Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting will open to the public on Feb. 24 and remain on view through April 8.



Detail from Jasper Johns' "End Paper" (1976).

'The Object as Subject': Creative Packaging at the Corcoran

By Jo Ann Lewis

The Corcoran seems to be thinking again—not just about money, its chief preoccupation over the past decade or so—but about art, even art before 1960.

After years of struggling to get on an even keel financially, the Corcoran now appears to be doing what museums are supposed to do—creatively package ideas to teach viewers how to look at and respond to works of art and to more fruitfully perceive the world around them. That is, after all, what makes museums more than mere storehouses for art.

It is not a dramatic change, but a welcome and palpable one, notable at the moment in a small exhibition titled "The Object as Subject," a few dozen American still-life paintings from the Corcoran collection, organized, with elucidating text, by the Corcoran's curator of collections, Edward Nygren.

This show follows other recent theme shows organized by Nygren, notably "Changing Prospects," which dealt with American landscape painting. Unfortunately such exhibitions get little attention in these days of razzle-dazzle extravaganzas like King Tut. They are, nonetheless, the lifeblood of a good museum.

"The Object as Subject" was chiefly organized to celebrate the acquisition last year of an amusing still-life, "Plucked Chicken" (by American trompe-l'oeil painter William Harnett) a takeoff on the pompous, game-trophy paintings which proliferated in the 1880s. Two such paintings of elegant game birds hanging by their feet are hung on the opposite wall.

But beyond offering the simple pleasure of seeing some of the Corcoran's still-life holdings, from Charles Bird King's "Poor Artist's Cupboard," dated 1815, to Franklin White's bird's-eye view of a tabletop, from 1973, this show leaves the viewer with new information and new things to think about.

The point is made, for example, that still-life and realism have been current preoccupations in art history since the mosaics of ancient Rome, with a strong resurgence in 17th-century Dutch painting, and again in early American art.

Within this context, the companion exhibition of "Still-Life Photographs," featuring newly acquired work by several contemporary photographers (happily, many from the Washington area), takes on added importance as a statement about the resurgence of interest in both still-life and realism in current photography. It also indicates a far greater range, both visually and



"Plucked Clean"

emotionally, than that observed in the pristine, largely decorative paintings from the past.

For example, Harnett's "Plucked Chicken" may be amusing as history, but comparison with Tim Kilby's poignant photograph of a frozen dog lost to an ice storm shows a far deeper awareness and sympathy with life. It may be cold outside, but it is far colder standing in front of Kilby's chilling photograph. Kilby is also concurrently showing solo at the Intuitive Gallery, 641 Indiana Ave. NW.

On the other hand, Ron Stark's food photographs, along with innumerable other fine works in color, all share the glistening virtuosity of the painted still-lives from the past.

Many of those still-struggling photographers will no doubt share Charles Bird King's sense of irony expressed in his "Poor Artist's Cup-

board," which deals with the "advantages" of poverty. The current generation, however, has some advantages unknown to its artistic ancestors. Both the National Endowment for the Arts and Polaroid Corp. have contributed funds to purchase these photographic works. It would be hard to think of a better place for them to be putting their money at the present moment.

The Corcoran's aforementioned still-life photo show begins with a tiny color photograph by Corcoran Art School professor William Christenberry, well-known hereabouts as a

Galleries

sculptor. Christenberry had been taking for years with a Brownie camera these small, straight-on images of the South as references for his paintings. Photographer Walker Evans convinced him that he should treat them as objects in themselves. Since then, Christenberry's jewel-like images of his native Alabama—its buildings, signs and graveyards—have been widely known.

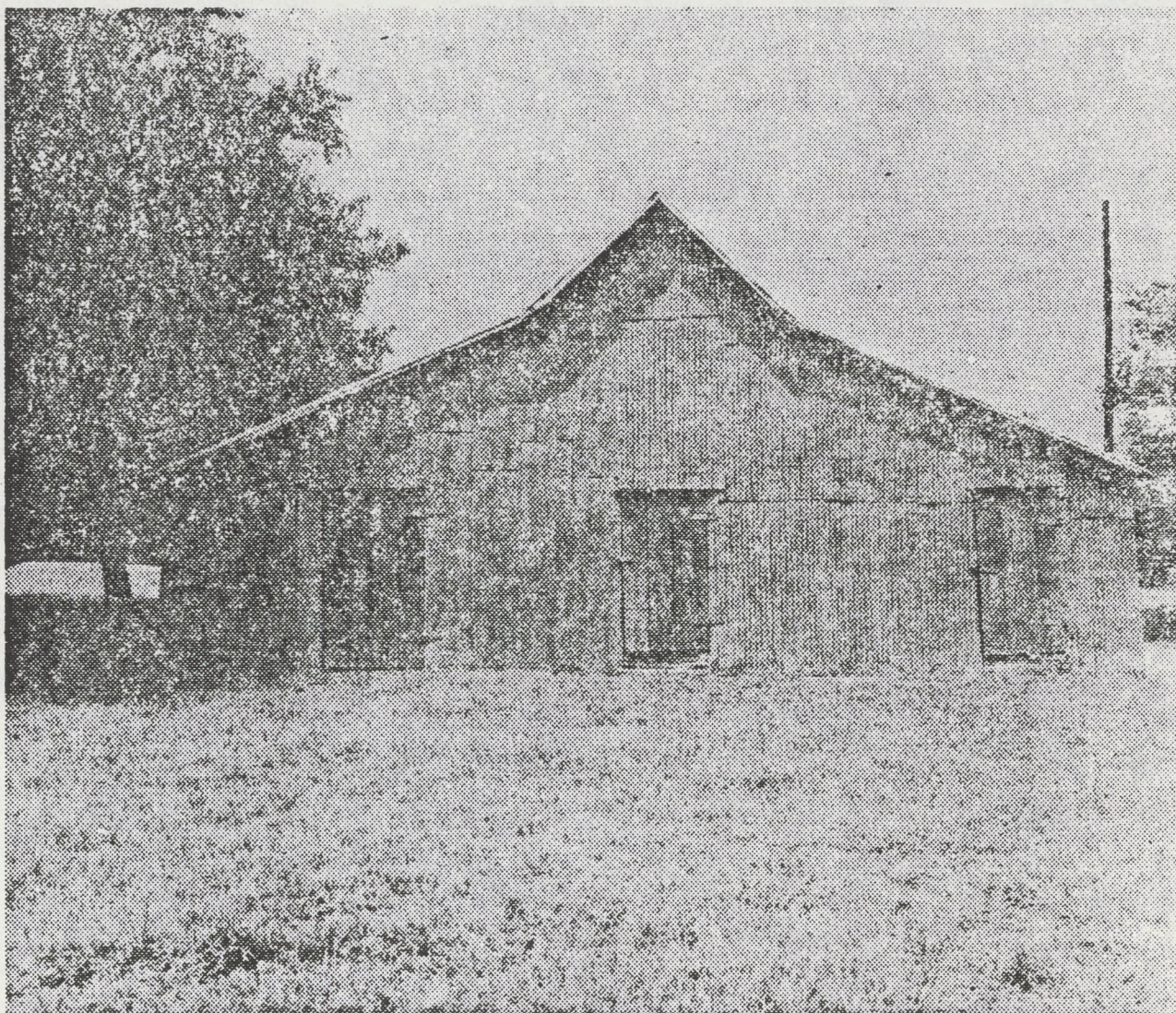
Now, diagonally across the Corcoran atrium, Christenberry bursts forth with a show of large new photographs made over the past two years with a borrowed, large-format camera—his first show on this scale. These 20 by 24 color prints also show greater compositional complexity and possibilities for the future.

The show begins with two of the most striking photographs, lush green landscapes (titled "Kudzu and Road near Akron, Alabama"), which seem, oddly, to imply ominous presences, though there is no one in sight. The first photograph appears to be a secret meeting of green, vine-covered ghosts. The point of view adds to the mystery: the photographer's vantage point seems defensive, as if he were afraid to approach the scene directly.

Christenberry is a one-man dial-a-fact about the South, and a phone call subsequently brought forth the fact that these kudzu vines had been introduced originally along roadsides in the South to prevent erosion, "but in that climate they take over everything, including smaller trees."

But he also explained that as a child he was told by his father to stay out of kudzu patches, lest a snake emerge in the form of a loop, and do him in.

"I try to show a direct response to what I see and feel strongly about,"



"Green Warehouse—Newbern, Alabama," by William Christenberry

he explains, and it is testimony to Christenberry's extraordinary abilities as a photographer that his response to what he sees comes through so clearly—fear and mystery in the case of the kudzu, reverence in contemplating the crumbling corrugated tin facades, tender but respectfully distant sympathy when looking at the grave of a child.

The photographs vary in interest—some too persistent in their frontality, others too redolent of Walker Evans. But throughout this show, notably in "Horses and Black Buildings," a look into deeper space implies, literally, broader horizons.

"I consider myself an artist, not just a photographer, or a sculptor or a painter," says Christenberry, and the total image of Christenberry as artist seems just about to snap into focus.

His work will be featured in the next issue of "Aperture" magazine, and Walter Hopps is currently organizing a show of his work in all media for an Alabama Museum. With luck, that show will also come to Washington.

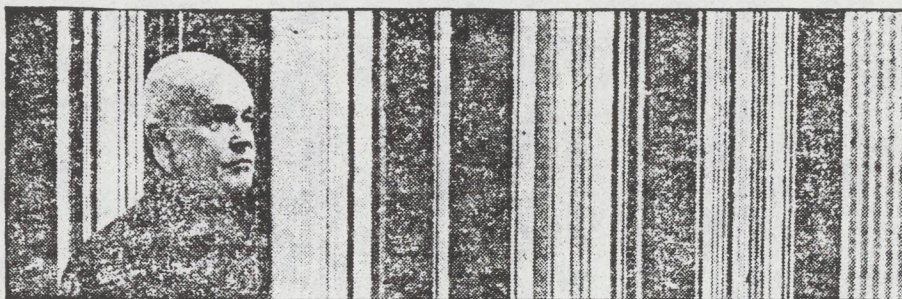
This exhibition, also paid for by the National Endowment for the Arts and Polaroid Corp., continues through Feb. 11, and the fine little accompanying catalogue is a must for any collector of books on photography.

Buying art is easy; reselling it is not. As a result, collectors trying to turn art back into cash are often forced to give the work to a dealer on consignment, and when (and if) the work is sold, pay a commission of anywhere from 30 to 50 percent. That can bite hard into appreciated value.

In an imaginative attempt to stimu-

late trade in unloved works of art, without taking away all the joy and half the profit. Gallery 4 (115 S. Columbus St., Alexandria) is having its second annual art resale through January. For a \$2 entry fee, it will take in a bona fide work of art, show it, and, if it sells, take only a 20 percent commission.

Prices have been set by sellers and are, the gallery reports, in line with the current market or below. Bargaining is obviously a possibility in such cases. Though the exhibition changes as things are brought in, the current group includes several early-20th-century American graphics by Peggy Bacon, Joseph Hirsch, Grace Albee and Armin Landeck, and, from the 19th century, a landscape etching by Thomas Moran.



Artist Gene Davis, exhibiting at the Corcoran, by Larry Morris—The Washington Post

Gene Davis—Top of the Line

Striking Stripes to Be Savored, Not Studied

By Paul Richard

"I see my paintings," says Gene Davis, "as a feast for the eyeballs."

His metaphor is apt. Davis is a color chef, an Escoffier of stripes, whose pictures, like grand meals, give a rich—but partial—pleasure. In "Gene Davis: Recent Paintings (1970-1978)," which opens here tomorrow, we see him at his best.

The exhibition is Davis' fifth one-man show at the Corcoran Gallery of Art. No artist dead or living has been shown there so often. He deserves the honor. Davis, whose sales earn him yearly a sum in six figures, is, at 58, this city's most successful and most persevering painter.

He brushed in his first color stripe in 1958. Though the thought of painting parallel stripes for one year, much less 20, would drive most artists batty, Davis does so gladly. Hundreds of hard-edge painters dabbled with his format in the 1960s, but while most of them grew bored, Davis kept right at it. There is no need to pity Davis in his windowless white studio, crawling on his canvas, painting one stripe, then another, *ad infinitum*. He has become a kind of master.

His pictures are not monotonous. Some are somber, shadowed, some are soft and airy; there are no two the same. They should be seen, as they are here, in large rooms in daylight. Visit them if possible on a sunny day with clouds. They do not look in morning light as they do at sunset. The always changing light, altering their subtle harmonies of color, makes them seem alive.

But luscious as it is, his show is also limited. His delicious pictures do not repay study. They should be tasted, but not pondered. They do not feed the mind.

They seem to have an order, an intellectual component, that is not really there.

Davis paints by whim, by guess, by intuition. He says, "I make no preliminary studies or sketches. I improvise my structure as I go along. When I begin work on, say, a 10-by-20-foot canvas, I have only the vaguest idea of where I am going. I just leap in and let the painting take me along for the ride."

Those who go to paintings for visual pleasure only may enjoy the journey. Those who search for substance, who try to figure out why that yellow stripe is there, or who attempt to place these pictures in the context of art history, may well find their efforts a waste of time.

When Davis tries to tie his art to that of the pop painters ("we both paint clichés"), or to Barnett Newman's "zips," or to the stars and bars of Jasper Johns, his claims do not ring true. Davis, as an artist, is less a serious scholar than he is a joker. When he paints, he plays.

There is something pure, something quasi-classical about his grand stripe paintings. Their repeated lines protect him. But when he leaves that format—and he is smart enough to do so only rarely—he displays, to our embarrassment, the almost-heedless whimsy with which he fuels his art.

His so-called "micro paintings" were boring dots of color. His "plank paintings" weren't much better. The child-

ish scribbled drawings that he is showing now at Protetch-McIntosh, 2151 P St. NW, seem to me the silliest works he has yet done.

One shows four small spirals—they look like little pigs' tails—emitting thought balloons. Except for four pink scribbled drawings of Gene Davis cost empty. Davis says these drawings, with their dashes, dots and doodles, were influenced by children's art. But children draw with innocence. The scribbled drawings of Gene Davis cost \$1,000 each. They seem, at first, a put-on, a thumbing of the nose at the exasperated viewer.

But they may be useful failures. Davis—a finer painter now than he has ever been—seems to know what's best for him. He has strong survival instincts. If you had painted stripes for 20 years, would you not, at last, need to let off steam? The viewer who sees Davis take such odd excursions suspects the artist does it in order to remind himself to go back to the stripe format—where he knows he belongs.

He is not a painter comfortable with complete freedom. But a little freedom helps him. When he gave up masking tape in the early '70s and, instead, began to paint all of his stripes free-hand, his art seemed to advance. When he loads his brush unevenly—for instance in the Corcoran's grand black and dark blue canvas—he comes up with a kind of dense and shadowed space that we have not seen before.

The real joy his finest pictures give us is, at least in large part, a joy we give ourselves. When we feast our eye on his countless colored stripes, we do so at a pace that he does not control.

His art, when we first saw it, seemed daring, *avant garde*. "Flatness" seemed important then, so, too, did hard edges and "uninflected color," but those exclusionary dogmas, through which we judged color painting, have lost much of their force. That hasn't hurt Gene Davis. His work does not need words. Though Davis does not like the term, his painting is, in the best sense of the word, decorative art. His Corcoran show closes Feb. 4.

GLOBE-TIMES, BETHLEHEM, PA. — MONDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 1978

Corcoran Director To Give Lecture

Peter C. Marzio, director of the Corcoran Gallery and School of Art in Washington, D.C., will give the opening lecture on Saturday for "Currier and Ives: Printmakers to the American People." The lecture, at 2 p.m. in the ballroom of Hotel Bethlehem, and exhibit, located in the 1761 Tannery, are sponsored by Historic Bethlehem Inc. and the Annie S. Kemerer Museum.

Marzio, an expert in the history of American prints, has organized numerous exhibitions at the Smithsonian Institution, where he served as curator of prints for four years. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1969 and has written books on American humor, art, and social history.

The Currier and Ives exhibit, which will be on view in HBI's 1761 Tannery from Saturday through Dec. 30, will include 50 lithographs and memorabilia from the well-known painters. The Tannery is open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and the first three Sundays in December from 1 to 4 p.m.



PETER C. MARZIO

The opening lecture by Marzio will be followed by a punch- and - cakes reception at the exhibit. Tickets for the program are \$2 for members, \$2.50 for non-members and \$1.50 for students and senior citizens. Reservations and payments should be sent to HBI, 516 Main St.

Guide

\$1.00 OCTOBER, 1978

TO THE ARTS

THE CORCORAN GALLERY

The venerable institution is cleaning up its building and its image

By Candace Johnson

In the light of all the attention focused on the National Gallery's new East Building, Washingtonians are re-awakening to the joys of art in their own city. The art museum most closely associated with Washington—and the city's oldest museum, more than a century—is the Corcoran Gallery and School of Art.

Three months ago, the Corcoran Board of Trustees named Peter Marzio its new Director. Marzio, an art historian and administrator, who has been Smithsonian director of exhibits for the last 10 years, is trying to get back to basics at the Corcoran and the Corcoran back to Washington. There is an air of expectation now at the Corcoran—for years, Washington's only museum dedicated to the work of contemporary, local artists. Slightly off-beat, the Corcoran is like a good relative you keep coming back to because of the promise of something new and exciting.

The Corcoran is one of the oldest museums in the country; yet its thrust has always been to develop and encourage the new. Its founder, William Wilson Corcoran, established the gallery and school "to elevate public taste through the contemplation of art, and to educate through the school." W.W., as he is called, was a native Washingtonian who had a taste for art collecting. A Corcoran bulletin describes him as among the first "to recognize the value of promoting and encouraging the American genius. . . he created one of the great collections of American painting and sculpture and an institution without precedent in American art."

The gallery was established in 1869 in the building that is now the Renwick Gallery of Art. The School of Art came in 1890, after Corcoran was impressed by the number of students who came to study the gallery's works, and work was begun on the present building at 17th and New York, in 1893.

The Corcoran soon became a landmark, known for its beauty and for its association with new and creative art. To this day, Corcoran's goals serve as a source of inspiration for his institution.

It remains private: dependent on its membership, endowment and matching funds. As Marzio points out, "This puts the Corcoran in a special category. We have to depend on the public for our support. Let's face it: contemporary art doesn't fall very high on most people's priority lists."

Yet Marzio is enthusiastic about the Corcoran and its role. "We have a super building and staff, an excellent school and collection. The Corcoran has everything going for it, but we have to market it and find firm financial support."

It would surprise some Washingtonians to know that the Corcoran is better known nationally than it is here, as the driving force behind contemporary and American art. During the late 50's and early 60's, the Washington Color School, promoted by the Corcoran, burst forth on the national scene with painters Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland and Howard Merling, the subject of a Corcoran retrospective just last spring. More recent-

ly, the Corcoran staged the environmental sculpture of Ed McGowin. The Corcoran's collection of American art ranks with that of the Philadelphia, Whitney and Detroit museums. Its treasures range from representative works of James Peale, Gilbert Stuart, John Trumbull, Rembrandt Peale and Whistler, to three major canvases: Frederick Church's *Niagara Falls*, Albert Bierstadt's *The Last of the Buffalo*, and Thomas Eakins' *The Pathetic Song*.

A large collection came from William A. Clark who, like W.W., was a self-made millionaire. One of the winners in the struggle between Montana mining barons in the late 19th century, commonly known as the "War of the Copper Kings," Clark amassed a large fortune and later on in life developed a passion for art collection. When he became a U.S. Senator from Montana he exhibited many of his works at the Corcoran and bequeathed his collection and a trust fund to the Corcoran. The Clark collection includes such unexpected objects as 17th century Dutch paintings and some splendid Daumier and Degas works from the 19th century. It grows even today, as the trust fund enables the Corcoran to continue acquiring major works of art.

The responsibilities of a private, innovative institution such as the Corcoran, however, lie beyond maintaining a permanent collection. The Corcoran has taken the lead in obtaining recognition for unknown artists and schools of art in exhibitions, and in providing a perspective on art through its school.

In 1907 the Corcoran Board of Trustees initiated the first in a series of Corcoran Biennial exhibitions of Contemporary American Oil Painting. For over seventy years these Biennials have served to recognize and record, in Corcoran's words, "the just claim of American art to rank with the best art of the world." Further, the Biennials have provided inspiration to the modern artist, who is encouraged by the prospect of a chance to display his work.

The Corcoran's Biennials continue to surpass themselves. In recent years, there have been innovative photography exhibitions, partly because of the interest of Jane Livingston, Associate Director and Chief Curator. This February, the Corcoran will stage a major exhibition of recent paintings by such American giants as Robert Rauschenberg, Roy Lichtenstein, Willem De Kooning, Jasper Johns, and Ellsworth Kelly. Currently, the Corcoran is featuring the photography of the Mexican artist Manuel Alvarez Bravo, an exhibition which will tour the country.

There is another important side to the Corcoran. "The Corcoran benefits," says Marzio, "from being not only a Gallery but a School." The School of Art is directed by Peter Thomas.

Livingston points out, "Studying the school's history gauges American taste. What the students were taught, what they painted, the teachers who taught them, and what was being shown in the galleries at the time, document the trends in American public taste for art."

The school's director, Peter Thomas, has this to say: "The school considers the Gallery its largest classroom. It's marvelous to study a work and then open your own back door to see it."

The Corcoran School of Art has two programs that serve the community. The first is a series of course offerings: from design to photography to the history of art. The second is the only full-time professional arts school offering in the city. It enrolls the serious student in a four-year course of study leading to a Diploma or to a Bachelor's Degree in Fine Arts, Commercial Art or Photography.

Some of the Corcoran's problems are immediate and surprisingly domestic. Marzio has been quick to realize that the Corcoran's physical appearance has given it a poor image. Layers of pollution and dirt have disguised the historic building almost beyond recognition. The generally run-down look projects a negative image, which adds to the general apathy.

Then there is the inevitable struggle with money. A small, ever-loyal staff is increasingly burdened with piles of bureaucratic papers, and the antiquated equipment and offices belie the Corcoran's contemporary focus. An equally loyal and supportive Board finds itself taking on staff functions which interfere with its fund-raising duties.

At 35, Marzio is young enough to create a stable administration. The past decade has taken the Corcoran through some pretty rocky terrain, with five directors in seven years: Walter Hopps, Gene Baro, Roy Slade, Gilbert Kinney, and now Marzio. Hopps and Baro, for example, were assigned administrative positions when they had neither the ability nor the inclination to be managers. The Corcoran has not been able to face up to the notion of New York's Museum of Modern Art, which recently appointed a businessman as its director. Marzio, with a double doctorate in history and art from the University of

Chicago, and with administrative experience from the Smithsonian, offers the best of all worlds, although he ruefully complains, "I haven't been able to take the time to look at a piece of art since I took this job."

Marzio's immediate plans for the Corcoran include these cosmetic considerations: cleaning the building and developing good modern graphics—signs—detailing what is available at the Corcoran, when it is taking place and where. He is also making plans for increasing membership and fund raising. Though these problems may seem unglamorous, it is only by meeting them that the Corcoran will be able to pursue its course of change.

What is happening inside the walls is exciting enough. Apart from the permanent exhibitions, the Corcoran sponsors several lecture and music series. Lectures take place in the Gallery every Wednesday at 12:30, from October to May. The Contemporary Music Forum gives concerts the third Monday of each month at 8:30. The Musical Evenings series presents solo artists, the Tokyo String Quartet and chamber groups from the National Symphony on Fridays at 8:00. Still another series, the Youth Artist Foundation Concerts, spotlights young artists each Sunday at 3:00.

It is not surprising that with all this activity Marzio calls the Corcoran, "the only place in town." We'll do whatever it takes to get them in-flashing neon signs, whatever—and then hit them with the good stuff." Marzio, as Corcoran, believes in "the American Genius." To the Corcoran's new director, "Our continual willingness to open up and accept new concepts, such as the Corcoran Institution itself, attests to the brilliance of American civilization." ■

The Washington Post

WASH. Post Aug. 9, 1978

Barye's Beasts in Bronze

The Savage and the Sublime Captured at the Corcoran

By Paul Richard

The sculptures of Barye at the Corcoran Gallery of Art are both gruesome and romantic. Barye, in his small bronzes, first unleashed, then choreographed the ferocities of nature. His birds and beasts are never still; they fight and eat and die.

The animals he left us are as carefully observed as those of John James Audubon, yet as humanized as Disney's. They are neither sentimental nor scientific. Something writhes within them, and they play roles in an opera savage and sublime.

Antonie Louis Barye spent his life in Paris. He was born in 1796 and died in 1875. Though his work seems a prediction of sculpture as diverse as that of Remington and Boehm, his art is of his time.

Even when displayed against white museum walls, his tautly muscled scenes of gore seem

to conjure up the plush salons of 19th century France.

Elephants squash tigers, deerhounds down a stag, muscles ripple, tails whip, a jaguar gnaws a hare—yet these scenes of bloody mayhem were made to be displayed on polished fruitwood tables among porcelains and plants.

Barye was a romantic, a contemporary of Delacroix and Darwin. Other artists of his age, Gericault, for instance, or Caspar David Friedrich, were similarly obsessed with unconquerable nature, her wind-whipped seas and mountain storms. Barye shared their preference for the fierce and the exotic. But the animals he carved and cast have in their precision something neo-classical, balanced and highly ordered. Barye gave his animals a dignity, a grandeur, hitherto found only in works that portrayed man.

See BARYE, B6, Col. 1

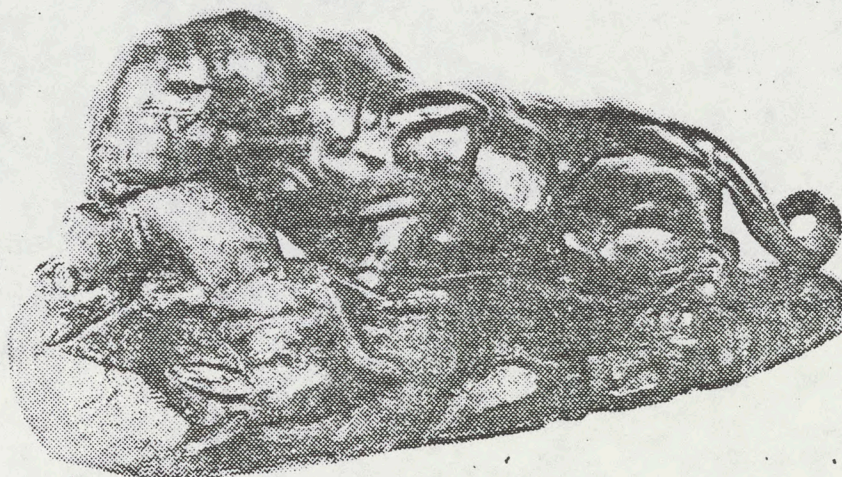


Barye's "Standing Bear"



Barye's "Deer Attacked by Two Scotch Hounds"

Nature Dignified, In Barye's Bronzes



Two of the Barye works in the Corcoran Gallery of Art collection: "Jaguar Devouring a Hare," above, and "North African Horseman Surprised by Serpent," right.

BARYE, From B1

Unlike Audubon and Darwin, Barye was not an explorer. Delacroix, his friend, traveled to North Africa to see the lions and the Arabs. But Barye stayed at home.

He saw his animals in Paris, either dead in the museums of natural history, or in cages at a zoo, the Jardin de Plantes.

Stubbs, the English painter, could see the world in horses. Barye was attracted to more exotic animals. His human beings are dry and stiff, but there is awesome energy in his beagles, snakes and bears.

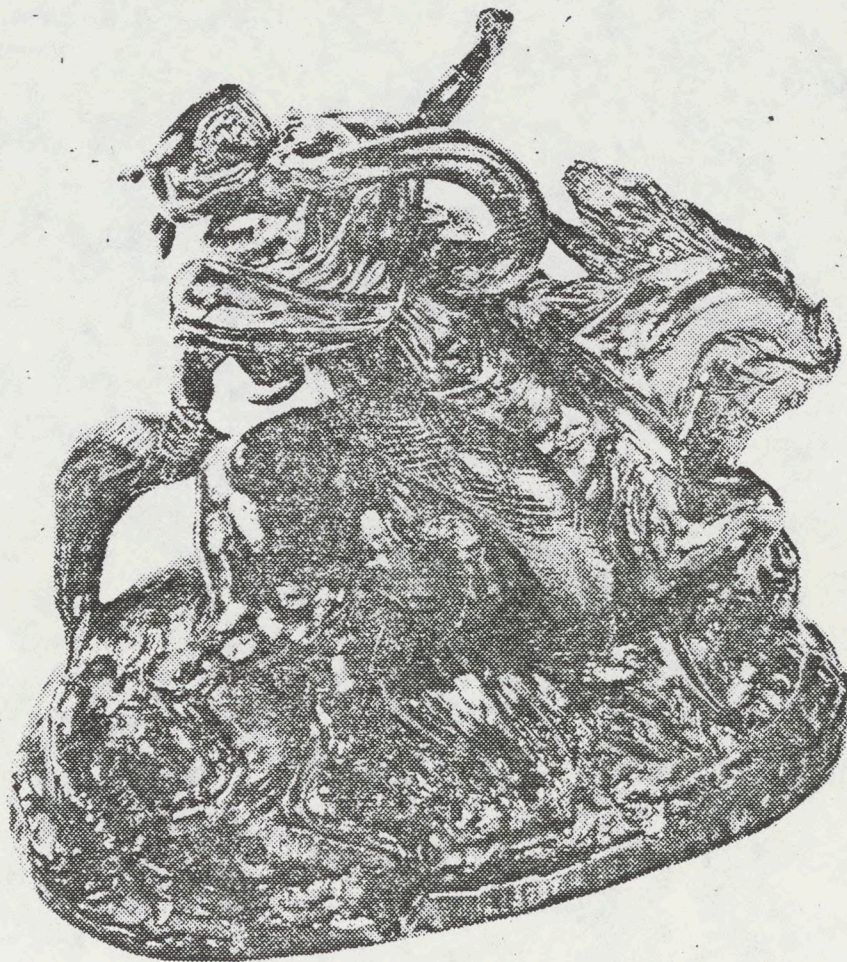
His father was a silversmith, and

Barye was apprenticed twice, first to an engraver, later to a goldsmith. His table-sized sculptures suggest the jeweler's art.

Because he cast his bronze with sand, rather than wax, the casts he took were rough. He finished them by hand.

Barye often struggled. Despite, perhaps because of, his aristocratic patrons, he lived, one should remember, in a time of revolution. He never won the Prix de Rome, and his works were frequently rejected by the Paris salons.

In 1873, shortly before he died, he



was visited in Paris by W. T. Walters, a founder of the Walters Gallery in Baltimore and a Corcoran trustee. Walters commissioned more than 100 Barye casts for the new Corcoran in Washington. Of these, some 40 of the finest have been taken from the store-rooms for the present show.

Barye's art is sometimes humorous—a bear plays with its toes, an ape rides on a gnu—but more often it is ferocious. Barye, it is apparent, stud-

ied the antique, the horses of the Greeks, the bronzes of the Renaissance, but still his sculptures seem prophetic. Though all of them were made more than a century ago, they still shock the viewer. His animals aren't noble pets, they suffer, struggle, kill. To look at them is painful. In their energy, their violence, in the pride they take in cruelty, they seem to predict much that was to come. The exhibition closes Sept. 10.

The Washington Star

Tokyo String Quartet: A finely honed ensemble

Making their mark with the Corcoran's Amatis

By Theodore W. Libbey Jr.
Washington Star Staff Writer

The Tokyo String Quartet may be Yale's quartet-in-residence, and — despite its name — it may well owe its strongest allegiance to New York City, now the hub of its performing activities. But Washington has a lot invested in the group, too — beginning with one of the finest matched sets of string instruments in existence.

Today, as has been true for the past five years, the sound of the Tokyo Quartet involves more than the finely honed ensemble of four young and superbly gifted Japanese string players — it has at its foundation the unified timbre of four splendidly crafted instruments, all made by Nicola Amati of Cremona between 1656 and 1677, and on loan to the quartet from the Corcoran Gallery.

"It's no comparison!" says the quartet's first violinist, Koichiro Harada, about the difference between playing on the Corcoran's Amatis and on the instruments he and his colleagues actually own. In the five years since accepting the gallery's loan, the Tokyo players have used the Amatis for all their concerts and recordings.

"This is very unusual," adds the group's cellist, Sadao Harada (no relation to Koichiro), in regard to the Tokyo's being entrusted with a complete set of rare instruments, all by the same maker, and on a full-time basis. "The only problem is, we can't take them to Communist countries... because of the insurance."

The sound of the instruments, according to consensus, is "mellow" — characterized by a warmth and darkness of tone which over the years has come to be recognized as an Amati trait. Cellist Harada is particularly happy with the "body" of the low register of the Amati cello — which, at 302 (years old), is the baby of the set. "It's tremendous," he pronounces, with a look of delight on his face. "It makes things easier to have that kind of sound built into the instrument."

The violist of the quartet, Kazuhide Isomura, who began his career as a violinist and switched to the lower instrument during chamber music studies at Juilliard, describes the sound of the two Amati violins as being "very much alive." Second violinist Kikuei Ikeda, at 31 the quartet's youngest member (and also its newest, having been with them since 1974), agrees.



The Tokyo String Quartet

April 18, 1978

Quartet: Finely honed musicians and a mellow sound

"In general," adds Ikeda, "the Amati violins are not so strong any more" — which he says is due to the higher string tension they have had to withstand for the past three centuries. He and the other members of the quartet agree that the Corcoran is extremely fortunate to have two of the very small number of Amatis still showing no signs of exhaustion after all those years.

The first violin of the Corcoran pair has a particularly distinguished pedigree, since it was made for the court of Louis XIV and is ornate, inlaid with small rubies and emeralds. It is one of the "Grand" pattern Amatis, of which about 50 were built, large violins of powerful tone, surpassing in clarity and purity the smaller instruments that Amati modeled on the patterns of his father Girolamo and his grandfather Andrea.

This "Grand" Amati pattern was Nicola's own design, which he did not begin to build until he was in his 60s and the acknowledged master of his craft. It represents the distillation of what the great luthier, who died at the advanced age of 88, passed on to his two most important students — Antonio Stradivari and Andrea Guarneri.

In the second violin of the Corcoran set, built in 1662 (six years after the Louis XIV instrument), this connection between the great teacher and his greatest student is borne out. Says Tokyo first violinist Harada, "The sound of Kikuei's violin is closer to the 'Strad' perhaps . . . it's a good deal brighter."

Even so, what really distinguishes the Amatis of the Tokyo Quartet is their closeness to each other. As violist Isomura puts it: "The most remarkable thing is how they blend sound — so we don't have to constantly work at it ourselves. . . ."

Thinking about the way they play is part of the Tokyo's life style. Not only are they highly critical of their own performances, but their concern frequently goes beyond sound and interpretation — to questions of repertory and programming. And, in looking at such questions, they are aware not only of where they have been as an ensemble, but where they are going.

That is why, when asked the direction of the quartet in coming years, violinist Harada can immediately answer, "For our future . . . Beethoven is the most important repertory." That is also why cellist Harada can say, "The feeling is entirely different



The Tokyo String Quartet: violinists Kaichiro Harada and Kikuei Ikeda, Kazuhide Isomura on viola and Sadao Harada on cello.

today from five years ago — both with us and with the audience."

"But the audience," Harada continues, "still associates us with the 'energetic' style we had then. Even in Mozart and Haydn our playing was very exciting, very intense, because the music was fresh. . . ."

And indeed, most audiences today do identify the group with Mozart and Haydn, and with that particular style of playing, even though the Haydn they performed this winter at the Corcoran — the Quartet in B-flat major ("Sunrise"), Op. 76, No. 4 — embodied a splendid sense of elegance and gracious refinement. According to cellist Harada, while the style of their Haydn has changed since the early days, the reasons for doing him still hold good.

"Haydn is very basic. It was important to start with Haydn because you have to have a very clean technique; otherwise, it shows."

If Haydn has become second nature for the group, Mozart is still one of the two most difficult composers they have approached, claims first violinist Harada. The other, says Harada, is Schubert. The group at present plays only one Schubert quartet, that in A minor. Eventually the Tokyo will play more Schubert . . . but they expect to go slowly for a while.

They also expect to commission new works for performance, since they feel that it is part of their responsibility as an ensemble to encourage composers to write for the string quartet. In this connection, first violinist Harada wonders aloud what might have happened had Ignaz

Schuppanzigh and his quartet not been around to play the works of Beethoven for the first time.

Cellist Harada echoes him, saying that the Tokyo would be delighted to someday have its name associated with similar great works written for it, adding that "so far we have gone into the standard repertory — we sort of waited 'til now."

If, up to now, the group has taken a fairly conservative approach in its programming, they have done so both brilliantly and knowledgeably.

"The repertory is so large," says violist Isomura, "we don't have to do anything we don't want to." But all four of the Tokyo players admit that, with the number of programs they are playing in cities like New York and Washington, they can afford to learn still more of that repertory.

The quartet also wants to branch out by playing pieces from the chamber repertoire with other artists — for example, the viola quintets of Mozart.

"We always enjoy playing with some other artist," says Isomura, "and I think it's good for us."

As for the matter of conservatism, second violinist Ikeda sums up his outlook, and that of his colleagues, when he says: "I think the string quartet is conservative — in essence."

Will there be great things to come from the Tokyo String Quartet when it celebrates its 10th anniversary next season . . . and what about beyond, as the group enters its second decade?

"Second decade!" shouts Isomura, amid a chorus of "Oh no's" from his colleagues.

"That sounds terrible!"

Child's Play

Art for Children: At These Corcoran Gallery Sessions, Drawing Is the Thing

Winters in Washington: These are the days that try parents' souls — cold and rainy weekends when the cartoons are going full blast and the living room looks like a war zone. If you are TV-weary and have run out of indoor ideas, help is on the way.

The Corcoran Gallery is offering a five-session series of beginning printmaking and beginning and intermediate drawing classes for children ages 4 to 11. The classes will be given on alternate weekends beginning Feb. 11 and will continue through mid-April.

The basic techniques of mono print, organic printing, collography, stencil printing and serigraphy will be covered in the beginning printmaking classes.

Children, in one class, for ages 4 to 7, and in another, for ages 8 to 11, will use their own ideas to design fabric wall-hangings, t-shirts and prints on paper. There will also be a parent/child workshop, in which parents should be prepared to participate.

The printmaking workshops will last one hour and 15 minutes with no more than 20 students per class.

THE BEGINNING and intermediate drawing classes will be available to children ages 8 to 11. Beginners will work from still-life in pencil, charcoal and pastel, and children with previous experience will explore these media on a more advanced level in the intermediate course. Both classes will also visit different exhibits in the Corcoran Gallery.

There will be no more than 15 students in each of the two-hour drawing workshops.

The classes, taught by Lou Jones and Virginia Jannotta — professional artists who have conducted previous children's workshops — will be offered at varying times on both Saturdays and Sundays.

The fee for the printmaking workshop is \$20 for members and \$30 for non-members; and for both levels of drawing classes, the fee is \$25 for members and \$25 for non-members. All supplies will be provided.

Registration begins on a first-come, first-served basis at an Open House at the Corcoran Gallery next Sunday, Jan. 15, from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., and will continue until the classes are filled.

In addition to printmaking demonstrations and an exhibition of children's works from the fall classes, the instructors and education staff will be on hand to answer any questions.

The Corcoran Gallery, located at 17th Street and New York Avenue NW, requests anyone attending the Open House to use the E Street entrance.

For more information call the education department at 638-3211, extension 45.

—Caroline Stewart

'Encouraging American Genius'

AMONG THE UNEQUALLED collection of old American paintings which until recently had been carelessly stacked in the dank basement of the Corcoran Gallery of Art was a portrait of its founder, William Wilson Corcoran. It was the happy idea of the Corcoran's new management to resurrect the memory of this unusual man, along with the paintings and sculptures he collected as part of the gallery's bicentennial celebration. A rags-to-riches businessman of Irish descent, Mr. Corcoran was born in Georgetown in 1798. He became a banker and in his 88 years had more influence on both the republic and this city than most people realize. In partnership with George Riggs, he became the financial agent for the federal government. Corcoran & Riggs sold the U.S. bonds which financed the Mexican War and made a killing in London and Paris when the market for those bonds declined at home. Mr. Corcoran himself served this city as a kind of latter-day Medici, bringing culture to the still uncouth capital and, in his later years, giving much of his fortune and most of his energy to "encourage American genius," as he put it.

Although he freed his slaves seven years before the Emancipation Proclamation, Mr. Corcoran's sympathies were with the South. When the storm broke, he moved to Europe with all his valuables, not to return until the Civil War was over. Much of his philanthropy and the energy with which he revived his gallery was aimed at impressing a suspicious federal government with his patriotism and devotion to the entire nation.

All this is shown at the gallery, with a reproduction of Mr. Corcoran's living room, portraits of his—yes—13-year-old wife, paintings, sculpture and memorabilia—an exhibition, in short, whose effect is much like having a visit with the old gentleman. A fascinating biographical essay in the catalog reinforces the acquaintance.

Mr. Corcoran would, no doubt, be most pleased with the recent transformation of his gallery. Only a few years ago, you may remember, the Corcoran was not just in dire financial condition, but, to put it bluntly, a mess. The building and its security were in such bad shape that

the trustees could not buy insurance for the collection. A mismanaged, overpaid and oversized staff threatened to overwhelm the exhibition program. An infatuation with artistic fads and novelty caused the neglect of the gallery's unique treasures from the past. Tension within the management rose to a terrible point.

Within a remarkably short time a new board of trustees, chaired by David Lloyd Kreeger, and a new staff, directed by Roy Slade, have managed to put Mr. Corcoran's house in order. The worst plumbing and financial leaks have been plugged. The gallery walls have been painted in daring but pleasing colors. The atrium, resplendent with velvet settees and posh ferns against a deep green wall, reflects the spirit of the building rather than the chaos of our time. Most important, the new display of the Corcoran's collection of 19th-century American art is nothing short of stunning. It should once and for all dispel the myth that American art began in 1913 with the abstractions of the Armory Show and the Ashcan School. New acquisitions (Anne Truitt, Kenneth Noland, Helen Frankenthaler and Richard Diebenkorn, among others) demonstrate the continued vitality of American art. A "Washington Room," with rotating exhibits of local artists, keeps the Corcoran rooted in the community. The privately catered Corcoran Cafe offers a welcome improvement over the government-issued chow dished out in the city's other museum cafeterias. All this would surely have pleased Mr. Corcoran. And this surely merits far greater public support than it receives.

The gallery's founder realized that if his museum were to function it would have to receive financial assistance from the federal government. But Mr. Corcoran often complained that this support was not forthcoming because of his open sympathy for the Confederacy. If that was a sin, he has surely redeemed himself. Entirely on its own private resources the Corcoran Gallery of Art has now become an important national institution and in itself a worthy contribution to the "American Genius."

75 cents

February 9, 1976

New York Times

ART

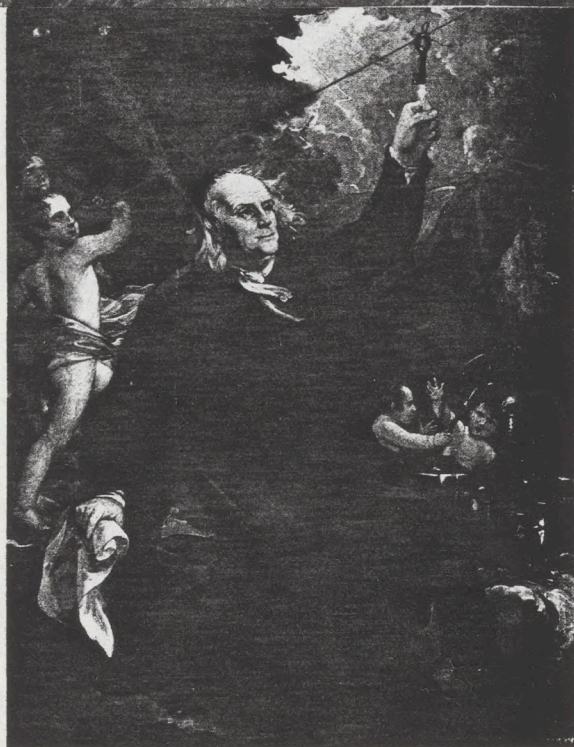
American Art 200 Years On

The Bicentennial is producing an epic unveiling—and redefinition—of American art. Paintings, sculpture, furniture, bookbindings, Indian masks, Eskimo blankets and neon signs—virtually every facet of America's enormously varied artistic output of the first 200 years will find its way from now until December into museums across the country. Several of the most impressive shows have already opened. In New York City, the Metropolitan Museum of Art is showing some 120 selections from its superb collection of American paintings, decorative pieces and furniture. The Indianapolis Museum of Art is brandishing just about all there is to see of paintings of the American West. The Cincinnati Museum of Art is displaying 1,000 samples of the finest American Indian art. In Washington, D.C., the nation's oldest museum, the Corcoran Gallery, is hailing—and attempting to define—"The American Genius" in a full exhibition of its valuable American collection. And in coming months, this crusade will be joined by virtually every art museum worth the name, from Coral Gables to Seattle.

It is a characteristically American crusade—big, well-heeled and polyglot, long on zest, short on ideas. Organized to be inclusive rather than exclusive, it has no objective beyond celebrating native art from its beginnings to the present. Nonetheless, it is already sending out important messages about the strengths and weaknesses of American art.

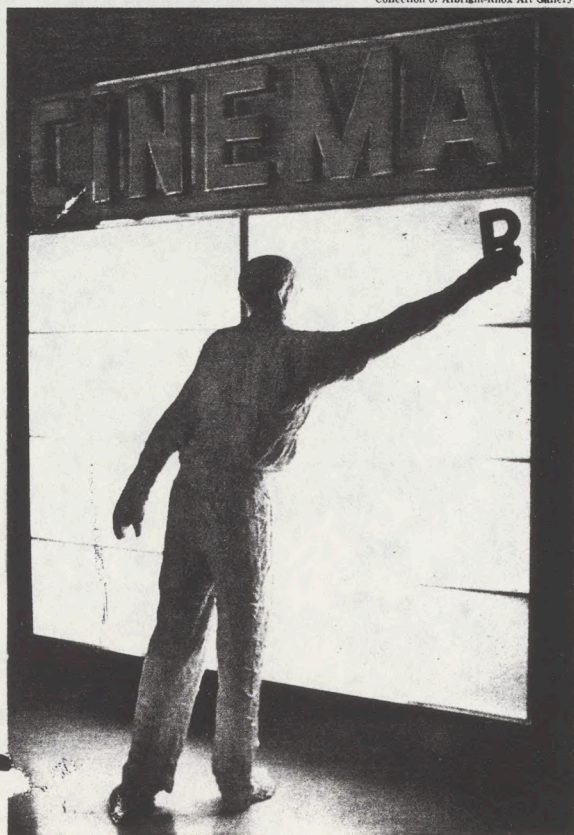
One of these messages can be glimpsed in two works, 150 years apart in their creation, that are featured in two widely disparate shows. One of them is Benjamin West's lavishly painted image of "Franklin Drawing Electricity From the Sky" in "Philadelphia: Three Centuries of American Art," a show that will open at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in April. Completed in about 1820, the painting shows the great tinkerer reaching out to pull electricity down from the heavens. The other is George Segal's "Cinema," a luminous tableau in "200 Years of American Sculpture," an exhibition that will occupy all of New York's Whitney Museum of American Art for six months, beginning in March. Constructed in 1963, it shows a contemporary workman also reaching skyward—toward the blazing lights of a marquee he is filling with a movie title. He and Franklin have much in common: both are alone, both are reachers, but more important, both are men of action, dealing with the facts of this world.

An obsession with things, natural forces and material appearance is the great, emerging theme of American art. Emerson, the first thoroughly American philosopher, struck



Courtesy of Philadelphia Museum of Art

Collection of Albright-Knox Art Gallery



(Top) Benjamin West
'Franklin Drawing Electricity From the Sky'
(1811-1820)

George Segal
'Cinema' (1963)



Albert Bierstadt
'In the Mountains' (1867)

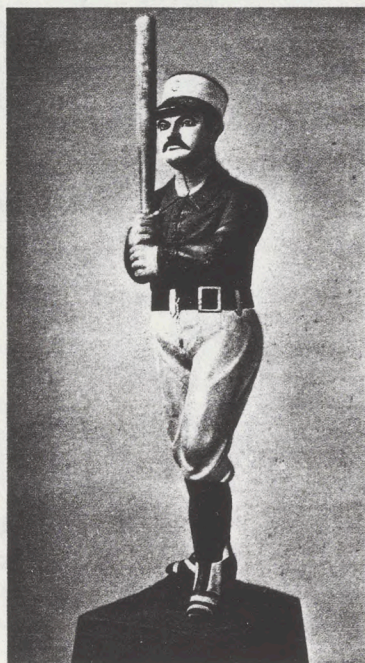
Courtesy of Wadsworth Atheneum

Hans Hofmann
'Golden Blaze' (1958)

Collection of Corcoran Gallery of Art



Samuel Anderson Robb
'The Baseball Player' (1888-1903)



Collection of Heritage Plantation, Sandwich, Mass.

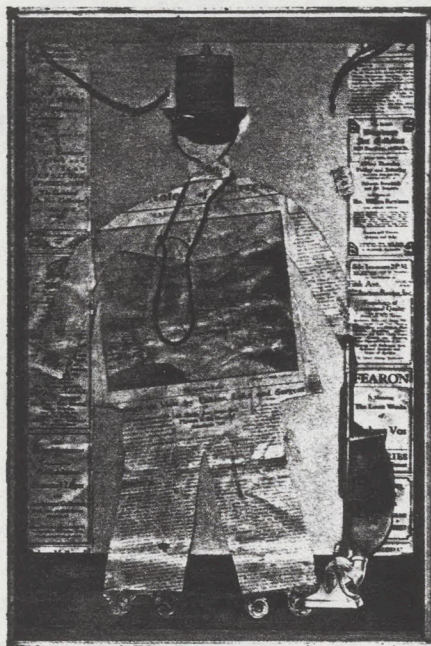
Marsden Hartley
'Portrait of a German Officer' (1914)



Courtesy of Metropolitan Museum of Art

Collection of Corcoran Gallery of Art

Arthur Dove
'The Critic' (1925)



Terry Dintenfass, Inc.

George Wesley Bellows
'Forty-Two Kids' (1907)



the keynote early in the nineteenth century: "A fact is an epiphany of God." From the first, American artists have shunned romanticism to glorify this idea, producing clear-eyed and realistic portraits and landscapes. Another painting in the Philadelphia show, Charles Willson Peale's "The Staircase Group," virtually leaps from art to fact. A life-size portrait of Peale's sons poised on a staircase, it is stretched across the front side of a real door. George Washington himself once bowed before the work, unaware that he was saluting art and not the artist's sons.

Increasingly, curators, collectors, critics and the public have come to identify this highly charged empiricism as the controlling passion of American art. Once a fellow artist refused to sit for Thomas Eakins, the great painter of the past century, complaining that Eakins "would bring out all the traits that I have been trying to hide." But Eakins and virtually all of the leading nineteenth-century artists flowered amid an explosion of naturalistic and scientific knowledge—they wanted to depict nature precisely "as it was," to paint its flora, fauna and light without idealizing it. American art properly begins with the industrial revolution, not—as did European art—with mysticism and medievalism.

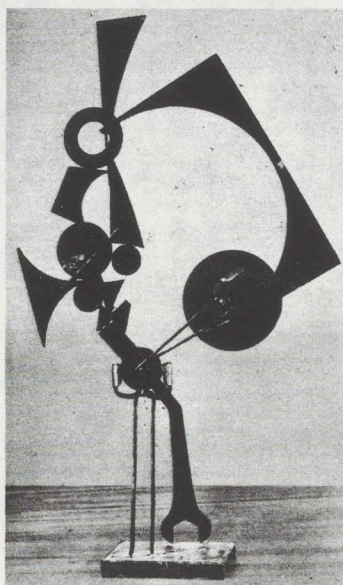
Spectrum: By the end of 1976, this great enterprise will have been fully revealed—from the Revolutionary period, which the Yale University Art Gallery is examining in "American Art, 1750-1800: Toward Independence," to massive one-man exhibitions next fall celebrating Robert Rauschenberg at the National Collection of Fine Arts in Washington and Andrew Wyeth at the Metropolitan.

Very little of the art between will be overlooked. The National Gallery of Art in Washington will focus on Thomas Jefferson's architecture. Folk art, exemplified by Samuel Anderson Robb's "The Baseball Player," is an important ingredient in many exhibitions. And there are a number of shows celebrating styles and crafts indigenous to particular regions. Of these the most significant is the Hudson River School of nineteenth-century landscapers, which the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford will display in March.

The two kickoff exhibitions at the Metropolitan and the Corcoran are impressive beginnings. William Wilson Corcoran's decisions to found his "National Gallery of Fine Arts" in 1869, and then to fill it with American as well as European paintings, were both scandalous innovations in his time. The great strength of his collection, underlined in a spanking-new installation by director Roy Slade, is landscape. "The painter of American scenery has privileges superior to any other," said Thomas Cole, the leader of the Hudson River School. "All nature here is new to art." Cole's lush paintings are at the Corcoran; so are Frederic Church's magnificent 7½-foot-long view of Niagara Falls and Albert

Bierstadt's monumental "The Last of the Buffalo," which shows the noble animal gored and writhing on the vast canvas.

These are intoxicated pictures—drunk on the wildness of nature and bathed throughout in a hard, bright light that flattens out every image. Bierstadt's "In the Mountains," which is in the Wadsworth Atheneum's collection, is virtually a hymn to light, a magnificent example of "luminism," the most influential current theory of American art history. According to its proponents, the Whitney's former director John I. H. Baur and art historian Barbara Novak, what distinguishes the work of Cole, Church, Bierstadt and others is the brilliant light that glorifies the object and unifies the whole painting, making it an art of frontal



Smith's "Voltron" (1963): In point of fact

assault, without the European virtues of pictorial depth and mystical allegory.

At the Met, this "super-realist" drive is everywhere in different guises. There is the *trompe-l'oeil* veracity of William Harnett, peculiarly American, that tries to depict objects so clearly that they demand to be felt, tasted and smelled. The influence of photography is strong in other paintings, such as the candid and casual grouping of Eastman Johnson's "The Hatch Family," with its alertness to uncomposed details of household debris. Thomas Eakins's "Max Schmidt in a Single Scull" is both luminist and photographic, bathed in light yet sharp-focused on the figure of the man up front. Among the Met's sculpture, "The White Captive," molded by the untaught Erasmus Dow Palmer in 1859 to the exact curve and line of a teen-age girl, is still shockingly immediate in its attempt to

defy the idealized tradition of white-marble classicism. And finally there is the aging, wrinkled and coarse bust of Andrew Jackson sculpted by Hiram Powers to the President's direction: "Make me as I am, Mr. Powers, and be true to nature always. . . I have no desire to look young as I feel old."

Much of what we are now seeing and learning in these Bicentennial exhibitions is the fruit of a sudden renaissance in art research and in the marketplace. Until ten years ago, the study of older American art was the stepchild of university art courses, largely ignored, and the work itself was a slow mover in the auction houses. "College art-history professors are still . . . Europeans, or Europe-trained," says critic and American art specialist Alfred Frankenstein. "They couldn't care less about American art." But the success of modern American art is forcing a re-evaluation. American-art courses have multiplied in the past decade. In Washington there is a centralized study complex, anchored by facilities at the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art, which has collected more than 8 million items of information, from letters to oral histories, on American artists living and dead.

Six Figures: Almost forgotten names and schools are now on the rise—nineteenth-century painters such as Martin Heade and William Trost Richards. The Hudson River painters now fetch six-figure prices. Early twentieth-century Americans are gaining serious attention—among them the realist George Wesley Bellows, whose "Forty-Two Kids" at the Corcoran Gallery catches his fondness for casual, earthy scenes; the pioneer abstractionist Marsden Hartley, whose cubistic "Portrait of a German Officer" at the Met is an early sign of European-influenced modernism, and the still-active Georgia O'Keeffe, represented by the radiant abstract drawing "Over Blue" at the Guggenheim Museum's "Twentieth-Century American Drawing: Three Avant-Garde Generations." The recent Arthur Dove retrospective, organized by Barbara Haskell of the Whitney Museum, revived a pivotal figure of the mid-'20s whose experiments in collage (like "The Critic" on view at the Guggenheim) and abstraction linked American art closely with the European avant-garde.

This link was completed during World War II, when major European figures fled Hitler to work in New York. The most influential and enduring was the artist-teacher Hans Hofmann, whose "Golden Blaze" shows him manipulating paint in the style long since identified exclusively with New York. Almost to the end, American art revels in physicality unleavened by overt ideas or even personality. The wrench welded to David Smith's "Voltron XVIII" at the Whitney Museum sums up this spirit—an art of fact raised almost to the pitch of ecstasy.

—DOUGLAS DAVIS with MARY ROURKE

American paintings at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

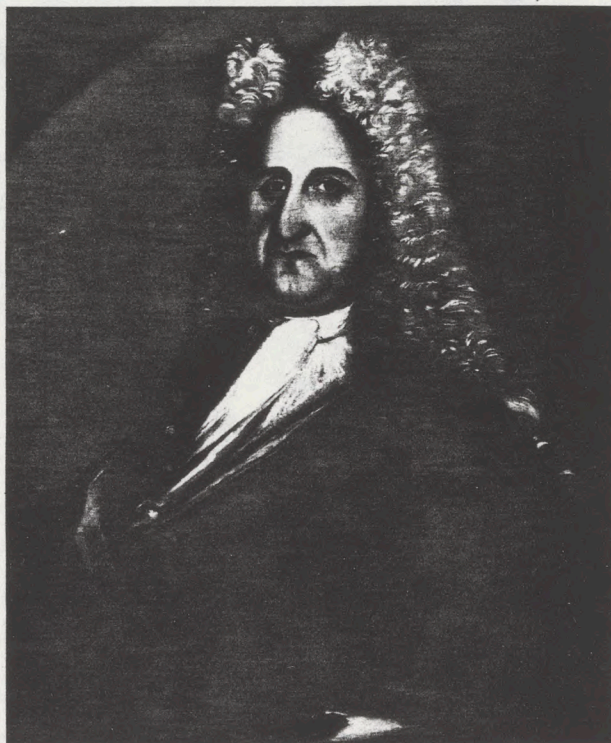
BY MARCHAL E. LANDGREN

IN 1859 WILLIAM WILSON CORCORAN (1798-1888), having retired from active business to pursue his philanthropies and his patronage of the arts, began construction of the original home of the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington. The jewellike structure in the French Renaissance style, now called the Renwick Gallery after its architect, James Renwick Jr., is today the showcase of the decorative arts maintained by the Smithsonian Institution's National Collection of Fine Arts. Corcoran planned the building as a public museum to house his personal collection of American and European art, with the express purpose of encouraging the "American genius in the production and preservation of works pertaining to the fine arts."¹

The building was taken over in 1861, before its completion, by the War Department for use by the quartermaster general during the Civil War. It was not returned to Corcoran to be completed until 1869. Chartered in 1870 as a nonprofit organization to be administered by a self-perpetuating board of trustees, the gallery opened to the public in 1874 with an exhibition of more than three hundred paintings and sculptures. The nucleus of the exhibition was, of course, Corcoran's personal collection, which he had transferred to the trustees. The Corcoran Gallery moved into its present home at Seventeenth Street and New York Avenue, N.W., in 1897. Designed by Ernest Flagg, the museum's current white-marble structure is considered by architects to be the finest and the best-articulated building in the Beaux-Arts tradition in Washington. In that city, where most public institutions, including its many museums, owe their existence to Federal support, the Corcoran has to this day retained its independent status, and draws its support from the community at large.

Over its one-hundred-year history the gallery has never lost sight of the dual role assigned to it by its founder. Emphasizing American art, both in its exhibitions and its acquisitions, it has managed to maintain a balance between preservation of the historical past and engagement in the contemporary scene. Nevertheless, for several recent years, under a succession of short-term directorships and changes in its curatorial staff, its public image became weighted in favor of its contemporary involvement. These were the years during which contemporary art in America was receiving international attention and the fate of museum directors and curators seemed to depend on their abilities as entrepreneurs between the artist and the public. Moreover, the spacious high-ceilinged galleries at the Corcoran are particularly suited to the exhibition of the large-scale works of the moderns, and their presentation consumed so much space that only a token selection of the permanent collection of American art remained on view.² Behind the scenes, however, the balance was maintained. The late Hermann W. Williams Jr., who served as director from 1947 to 1968, continued to build the collection, filling

Fig. 1. *Portrait of a Gentleman*, artist unknown, c. 1718. Oil on canvas, 30 $\frac{1}{2}$ by 25 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches. This portrait, the oldest in the Corcoran collection, has its prototype in the line engraving by George Vertue (1684-1756) of the life portrait of the astronomer Edmund Halley (1656-1742) by the English artist Richard Phillips (1681-1741). The sitter, who is believed to have been from the Massachusetts Bay Colony, is unknown, but bears a striking resemblance to certain members of the Saltonstall family.





Pl. I. *Simon Pease* (1695-1769), by Robert Feké (c. 1706-c.1752), c. 1749. Oil on canvas, 50½ by 40 inches. The sitter was a distinguished Newport merchant who served in the General Assembly of Rhode Island from 1729 to 1757 and was an incorporator and trustee of Rhode Island College (now Brown University).

Pl. II. *A Boston Gentleman*, by Christian Gullager (1759-1826), c. 1790. Oil on canvas, 71¼ by 54 inches. A native of Copenhagen, Gullager studied at the Royal Academy there and under Jacques Louis David in Paris. He came to America by way of the Danish West Indies and was in Boston for some ten years until 1797. After a stay of a few months in New York he settled in Philadelphia. A scenic artist and sign painter as well as a portraitist, he was not in the least dependent on English prototypes and his work adds a lively note of dissonance to the sober tone of most American eighteenth-century portraits. Gift of Eva Markus, through the Friends of the Corcoran.



lacunae to the extent possible; and Dorothy W. Phillips, curator of collections, who has served on the curatorial staff in various positions since 1959, quietly worked at compiling *A Catalogue of the Collection of American Paintings in the Corcoran Gallery of Art*, two volumes of which have now been published.³

Under the present director, Roy Slade, the dual role of the Corcoran has been publicly reasserted. Twelve galleries have been refurbished with the aid of the National Endowment for the Arts and set aside for a permanent installation of the collection of American paintings, while at the same time sufficiently ample space has been reserved for the work of living artists. Work has also begun to conserve the Corcoran's large collection of American works on paper—watercolors, drawings, pastels, and prints. The catalogue of American paintings is being kept up to date, and catalogues of the works on paper and of the American sculptures are projected.

The Corcoran collection of American art is without doubt the most broadly comprehensive, if not necessarily the largest, in existence. At this writing, it includes 781 paintings, 244 sculptures, 160 watercolors, 635 drawings, 32 pastels, and 2616 prints. In its totality, it represents the tastes of many generations of Americans and the many influences that have affected the course of American art.

As presently reinstalled, about one-quarter of the American painting collection is on display, approximately two hundred canvases. Limited to works by artists born before

Fig. 2. *Elizabeth Stevens Carle* (1761-1790), by Matthew Pratt (1734-1805), c. 1790. Oil on canvas, 38 by 31½ inches. Elizabeth was the daughter of Thomas and Hannah Smith Stevens, who lived on the road between Trenton and Princeton, New Jersey. After the Revolution she married a Hessian captain, Israel Carle, whom she had first met in 1776. The prototype of Pratt's charmingly ingenuous portrait of her is a mezzotint of c. 1701 by John Simon after Jacopo D'Agar's (1640-1715) portrait of Anne, countess of Sutherland.



Fig. 3. *Woman with a Fan*, by William Jennys (w.c. 1795-1810), c. 1800. Oil on canvas, 30½ by 25 inches.

Fig. 4. *Henry Clay*, by Charles Bird King (1785-1862), 1821. Oil on canvas, 36½ by 28½ inches. Clay is depicted as the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and holds a resolution of the House, dated February 10, 1821, supporting the desire of South Americans to achieve independence. The silver inkstand, which is still placed on the Speaker's desk when the Congress is in session, was designed by J. Leonard, and is discussed in *ANTIQUES* for October 1972, pp. 684-685.





Pl. III. *Portrait of a Lady*, by Ammi Phillips (1787 or 1788-1865), c. 1815. Oil on canvas, 30 by 25 inches. Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Alfred J. Luessenhop.

1910—those included in the two published volumes of the catalogue—the selection reflects the present state of scholarship in American art. Almost all the holdings by painters of the colonial period and the early years of the republic are included, testifying to the amount of study that has been given to these periods. But as the installation, which is more or less chronological, moves forward in time, the selection tends progressively to reflect current interests in the American past. The Hudson River school, from Thomas Cole to Frederic Edwin Church, is well represented. The triumvirate of the so-called native American school—Winslow Homer, Albert Pinkham Ryder, and Thomas Eakins—is juxtaposed to the trio of their expatriate contemporaries: Mary Cassatt, James Abbott McNeill Whistler, and John Singer Sargent. The influence of the French impressionists on the native idiom is emphasized in the paintings of *The Ten*, and is evident in the work of the painters of modern life, known as the Ashcan School and *The Eight*. The selection ends with the beginnings of modern art in America as seen in the influence of the School of Paris on American art. Thus the selection, in the best of museum traditions, offers the visitor a concentrated view of the history of American art as modern scholarship has revealed it. The collection, of course, is more comprehensive than indicated by the selection currently displayed. If the hopes of the Corcoran are realized, special exhibitions

of other works in the collection will be mounted from time to time as scholarship discloses their significance.

From the general view offered by the Corcoran collection, it is apparent that the art of America well into the nineteenth century is largely a reflection of European secular art of the seventeenth century, the art associated with the great cultural changes wrought by the Reformation. This, of course, is not surprising in the face of the predominantly Protestant population of North America. In the Latin colonies of Central and South America, where early education was in the hands of Catholic missionaries, the religious art of the Counter Reformation was more influential. In the North American settlements, however, the portrait, patterned on seventeenth-century prototypes from northern Europe, dominated the art of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. With the advent of the republic, the still life and the landscape, both of which had previously appeared in colonial portraiture as attributes of the sitter's personal estate or character, made their appearance as independent categories of painting, as did the paintings of everyday life, called simply "genre" for want of a better name. Religious and historical subjects, on the other hand, have rarely engaged the North American artist or his patron.

The still life, as practiced in nineteenth-century America, had first flourished in seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish painting. The landscape came to America from the

Pl. IV. *Portrait of a Gentleman*, by Phillips, c. 1815. Oil on canvas, 30 by 25 inches. Luessenhop gift.

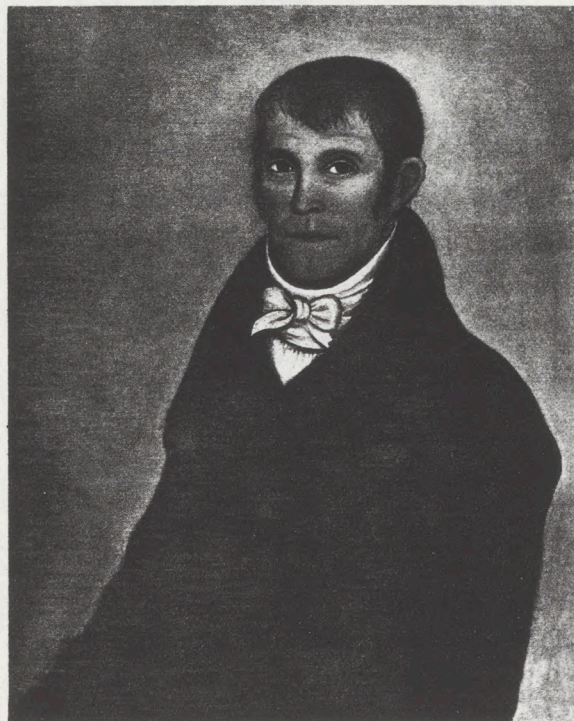




Fig. 5. *General Andrew Jackson* (1767-1845), by Thomas Sully (1783-1872), 1845. Oil on canvas, 97½ by 61½ inches. Although this portrait was painted after Jackson's death, the artist had sketched him from life shortly after Jackson's heroic defense of New Orleans against the British in 1815. Gift of William Wilson Corcoran.



Fig. 6. *Telemachus and Calypso*, by Benjamin West (1738-1820), 1809. Oil on canvas, 41¼ by 58¾ inches. At the turn of the century the academies of art considered landscape as the setting of biblical or mythological themes an acceptable genre of painting. This view of landscape had few American adherents. However, Benjamin West left America before the Revolution and belongs more to the history of English painting than of American. The scene is taken from Fénelon's *Télémaque* (1699). Gift of Bernice West Beyers.

English painters who had been influenced by seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish landscapists, and by Claude Lorrain, Gaspard-Poussin, and Salvator Rosa, whose work was much favored by English collectors of the eighteenth century, and also greatly affected English literature and landscape gardening. The scenes of everyday life also came to America by way of England from the Dutch so-called Little Masters of the seventeenth century. The New World's access to all these sources was for the most part through engravings it received from England.

Portrait, landscape, still life, and genre painting have existed throughout the history of world art, but until almost the end of the nineteenth century they were humble, popular forms of expression. More or less literal reflections of the everyday world, they lacked the affective, magical power of figurative art, in which the significance of the picture transcends the subject depicted. The still life and the landscape served to decorate the home; the portrait, to immortalize the transient; the genre painting, to record the familiar. Their lack of magic, of what art historians are wont to call "ideated sensation,"⁴ by which the artist communicates feeling through form, was the very quality that appealed to the iconoclasts of the Reformation. No better expression of this can be found than in the words of the seventeenth-century English artist-connoisseur Edward Norgate (d. 1650). Speaking of landscapes, Norgate said, "of all kinds of painting [they are] the most innocent, which the Divill himselfe could never accuse of idolatry."⁵ At the time he said this, Norgate was in Antwerp buying pictures for Charles I, whose Catholic queen made his position on the throne a precarious one during a period of great political and religious strife.



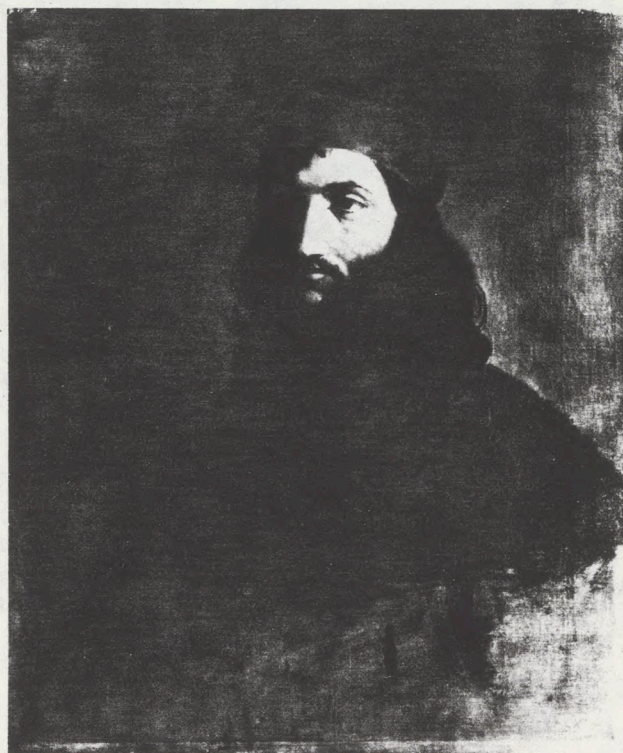
Fig. 7. *The Sortie made by the Garrison of Gibraltar on the Night of 26/27 November 1781*, by John Trumbull (1756-1843), 1787. Oil on canvas, 15 1/4 by 22 1/4 inches. Trumbull was a student of Benjamin West, who encouraged the painting of modern history, with the figures in modern dress. This is the first of three versions Trumbull did of the subject. It depicts the Spanish captain Don José Barboza, mortally wounded by the British under the command of Sir George Augustus Elliott, refusing the aid of the British officers, preferring to die where he was shot down. This is a good example of academic historical painting of the time in which "quotations" from the art of the past were encouraged: the figure of Don José, for example, is based on the Hellenistic statue entitled the *Dying Gaul*.

Fig. 8. *Sketch of a Polish Jew*, by Washington Allston (1779-1843), 1817. Oil on canvas, 30 1/4 by 25 1/4 inches. This remarkable sketch is one of four Allston made of the model in London in 1817 during his second trip abroad.

Such innocence—to use Norgate's term—not only characterizes American art of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but accounts for the generally illustrative nature of American art which has persisted well into the twentieth century, reaching its apogee in the works of Winslow Homer (Fig. 17), Thomas Eakins, and Edward Hopper. Indeed, this sense of the illustrative is what, in various ways, has been called the *Americanness* of American art.

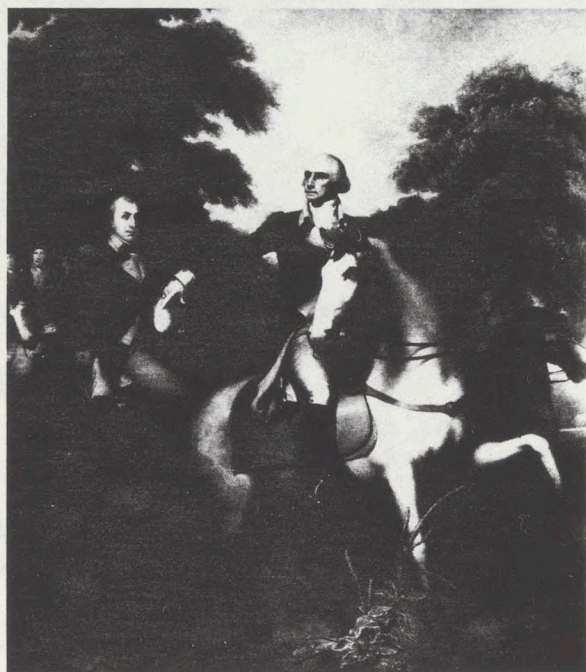
The lack of artifice, which defines innocence, has great charm, and that charm is sometimes multiplied, as in the work of Ammi Phillips, where the artist's means of expression are as free of artifice as his purpose (Pls. III, IV). The history of nineteenth-century European art, from Ingres to Gauguin, is replete with efforts to challenge the artifices of academic training by reviving the innocent arts of earlier epochs: the interest of the German Nazarenes and of the English Pre-Raphaelites in the work of the Italian primitives is well known. But in the American colonies, and especially in the young republic, such innocence was real, a genuine archaic response to the need for visual communication by settlers cut off from the traditions and institutions of their past. With few original models to serve them and little access to training, most of the artists were necessarily self-taught.

Unlike the folk arts, which were a continuation of European popular arts, handed down from generation to generation, the primitive art⁶ of early America was an indigenous expression of a new culture in a new world.





Pl. V. *The Old House of Representatives*, by Samuel F. B. Morse (1791-1872), 1822. Oil on canvas, 86½ by 130¾ inches. As rebuilt after the burning of the Capitol by the British during the War of 1812, the old House of Representatives (now Statuary Hall) designed by Benjamin Latrobe, was considered by many, including Morse, to be one of the most beautiful chambers in the world. Morse was allowed to study the room at night by the light of the great brass chandelier of Argand lamps. All but one of the eighty-six persons represented in the canvas sat for the artist (see Fig. 10), who has depicted the members of the House during an evening session. Hoping to stabilize his shaky financial position, Morse took the painting on a tour which did not, however, meet his expectations.



And, unlike the modern primitives, who are amateurs, those early artists were professionals. A naïveté similar to that of the early primitive artists is found throughout the history of American art—for example, in the work of Albert Pinkham Ryder, who resisted all training, and in the work of such early American moderns as Patrick Henry Bruce and Arthur Dove (all three are represented in the Corcoran collection), who innocently translated the highly complex structures of the School of Paris, foreign to both their experience and their training, into simplistic statements of line and color.

Alongside the tradition of the literal, which has been the chief concern of most historians and critics of American art, is the much less well-understood tradition of the figur-

Fig. 9. *Washington before Yorktown*, by Rembrandt Peale (1778-1860), 1824-1825. Oil on canvas, 139 by 121 inches. This painting was intended for the rotunda of the United States Capitol and was exhibited there in 1825. It shows Washington, accompanied by his staff officers—Hamilton, Lafayette, Knox, Lincoln, and Rochambeau—rebuking a subordinate for neglect of duty. *Gift of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association.*

Pl. VI. *The Long Story*, by William Sidney Mount (1807-1868), 1837. Oil on panel, 17 by 22 inches. American genre painting begins with Mount, who was among the first students of New York's National Academy of Design. He supported himself as a portraitist, but the rural life of his native Long Island fascinated him, and he set out to document it. He considered this his best painting.



Pl. VII. *Waiting for the Stage*, by Richard Caton Woodville (1825-1855), 1851. Oil on canvas, 15 by 18½ inches. Woodville studied at Düsseldorf, and after six years in Germany moved to Paris, where this picture was painted.





Fig. 10. *Joseph Gales*, by Morse, 1821-1822. Oil on panel, 10¼ by 8¾ inches. This is one of the few sketches known to survive of the eighty-five Morse made from life to include in his *Old House of Representatives* (Pl. V). In that large painting, Gales, a reporter for the *National Intelligencer*, stands at the extreme left.

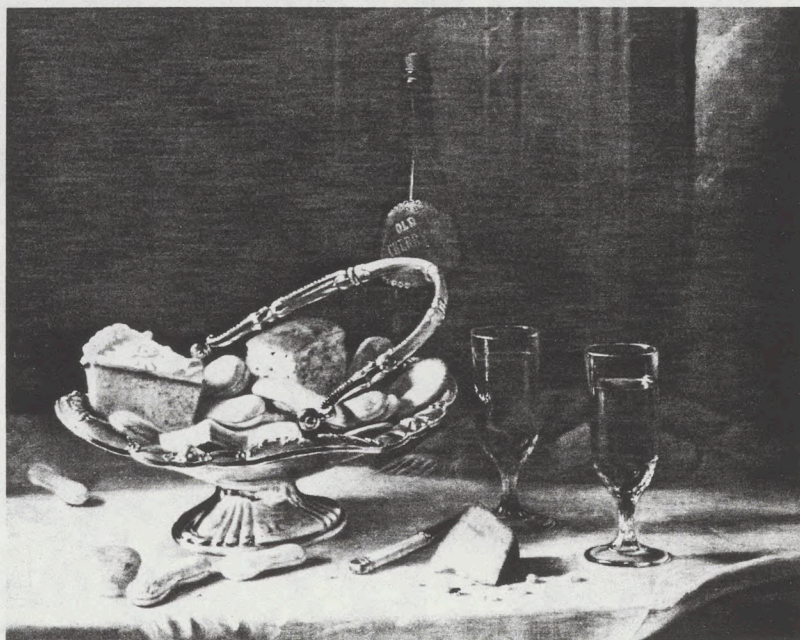


Fig. 11. *Still Life with a Silver Cake Basket*, by John F. Francis (1808-1886), 1866. Oil on canvas, 19¼ by 23½ inches.



ative in American painting. It can be said that Western art in the figurative tradition moved from the representation of man created in the image of God, which flourished in historical and religious painting before the nineteenth century, to the representation of what the English painter John Constable called "God Almighty's daylight," which found expression in the landscape painting of the nineteenth century. In other words, it was a move from an anthropocentric outlook to a modern pantheistic view of the world.

The study of natural light dominated the figurative art of the nineteenth century. Sketching from nature, the artist soon realized that the continually changing aspects of the world around him were due to natural phenomena that were not only beyond his control but to which he had to submit. The phenomena he observed were due to the light from the sun, whose colors were dispersed and reflected from whatever lay in its path, only to be further dispersed in the atmosphere before reaching his eyes. He accepted the

Fig. 12. *Still Life. Flowers and Fruit*, by Severin Roesen (d. c. 1871), 1848. Oil on canvas, 36 by 26 inches. Roesen came to the United States from his native Germany about 1848. His work lends credence to the belief, held in some quarters, that the fruit and flower decorations on porcelain and pottery imported from Europe were a source for American still-life painting.

challenge of epitomizing the world in terms of the colors so dispersed. The result was that his canvas was treated as a plane surface on which the colors he had observed in nature were applied to be reflected toward the observer of his work, affecting the observer in the same way that they had affected the artist in nature. Thus the observer was subjected, as the artist had been by natural light, to the colors that radiate from the surface of the canvas (see Fig. 13).

In the art of the Renaissance, by contrast, the foreground of a painting gives the illusion of being an extension of the ground on which the observer stands, and the background gives the illusion of the volume—height, width, and depth—of the space as defined by the painter. According to the laws of perspective, formulated during the Renaissance, all figures had to conform not only to the limits of that space but also to the point of view of the observer. To define that space clearly, the artist had to rely on the artifice of an ideal light of uniform intensity, evenly distributed over his canvas.

The laws of aerial and linear perspective are abstractions of the highest order, transcending all subject matter, and they are today the basis of common-sense perception. They were promulgated by the academies of art at least until the close of the nineteenth century, and they lie at the heart of the literal tradition in American art. The study of light, however, violated the limits of the world as defined by the laws of perspective. It detached the observer from the events described by the artist. Figures conformed not to the observer's view of the space they occupied but to the various degrees of the intensity of the light dispersed and



Fig. 13. *Flowers on a Window Ledge*, by John La Farge (1835-1910), c. 1862. Oil on canvas, 24 by 20 inches. The painting was executed at La Farge's family's house in Newport, Rhode Island.



Fig. 14. *Duck Shooting*, by William Ranney (1813-1857), 1850. Oil on canvas, 30 $\frac{3}{4}$ by 40 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches. Ranney is known to have enjoyed duck shooting in the Hackensack Meadows of New Jersey after he moved there in 1848. *Corcoran gift.*



reflected by them in an open, seemingly boundless space. Thus, the last vestiges of the anthropocentric outlook disappeared from the work of art, as, it may be added, they had also disappeared from modern science and modern religion. In modern abstract art, which is an outgrowth of the study of light and color, subject matter too has disappeared. Only light and color remain, and their affective power has given rise to the curious notion, prevalent in modern criticism, that the work of art is autonomous, having a life of its own, independent of either artist or observer.

The earliest painters in the figurative tradition in American art were the colorists George Inness and Robert Loftin Newman. But among the landscapists there are several,

Pl. VIII. *Niagara Falls*, by Frederic Edwin Church (1826-1900), 1857. Oil on canvas, 42½ by 90½ inches. The rainbow challenges the eye as its colors seem to emerge from the surface of the canvas. It so disturbed John Ruskin, when he saw the painting in London, that he would not believe that the colors were part of the picture until he had convinced himself that they were not a prismatic effect of light coming through the gallery window.



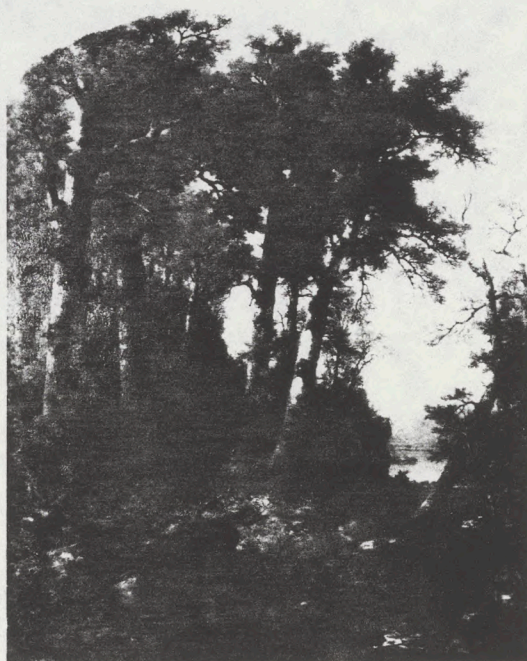
all represented in the Corcoran collection, whose preoccupation with the phenomenal aspects of light pointed the way to that tradition. Frederic Edwin Church, for example, painted the natural dispersal of light into its constituent colors in the phenomenon of the rainbow (Pl. VIII), and Albert Bierstadt, the natural dramatic dispersal of light due to the atmospheric changes of an impending storm (Pl. IX).

Through the literal tradition the artist consciously documents the sentiment of his time, and through the figurative he intuitively gives visual form to the spiritual and intellectual pursuits of his time. The comprehensiveness of the Corcoran collection makes it possible to illustrate both traditions.



Fig. 15. *Tornado*, by Thomas Cole (1801-1848), 1835. Oil on canvas, 46 1/2 by 64 1/2 inches. The tornado, which momentarily obscures all light in its path of destruction, is an awesome, sublime manifestation of the "spirit," described by Cole in his journal as "that mysterious principle, unknown even to itself, that vivifies the earth."

Fig. 16. *The Edge of the Forest*, by Asher B. Durand (1796-1886), 1871. Oil on canvas, 78 1/2 by 64 inches.



I am grateful to Roy Slade, director of the Corcoran, and to the members of his curatorial staff, especially to Dorothy W. Phillips, curator of collections, for their generous assistance in the preparation of this study.

¹Deed, May 18, 1869, by and between William W. Corcoran and the trustees of the Corcoran Gallery.

²In 1928 two adjacent wings, designed by Charles A. Platt, were added to the building, one to house the William A. Clark collection of paintings, sculpture, and the decorative arts that was bequeathed to the Corcoran in 1925.

³Volume 1, *Painters Born before 1850* (1966, reprinted 1974), 160 pp., 138 illus., paper covers, \$7.50; Volume 2, *Painters Born from 1850 to 1910* (1973), 204 pp., 124 illus., 8 in color, paper covers, \$10.00. These well-documented catalogues are models of their kind. They contain biographical information on the artists and full descriptions of their works.

⁴Bernard Berenson, *The Italian Painters of the Renaissance* (London, 1952), p. 199.

⁵Quoted in *Oxford Companion to Art*, ed. Harold Osborne (New York, 1970), p. 639.

⁶Many people confuse the terms "folk art" and "primitive art." To my mind folk art is the traditional popular art of ethnic groups, passed on from generation to generation. Primitive art stands for the early phases in the historical development of painting and sculpture in any given country. There are, of course, modern primitive painters, such as Henri Rousseau.



Fig. 17. *A Light on the Sea*, by Winslow Homer (1836-1910), 1897. Oil on canvas, 28 1/4 by 48 1/4 inches. Homer was an illustrator par excellence and so completely conveyed the impact of his subject that the observer begins to supply his own narrative. This scene depicts the Bay of Islands on the west coast of Newfoundland.



Pl. IX. *The Impending Storm*, by Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902), 1869. Oil on canvas, 29½ by 49½ inches.

Fig. 18. *Autumn on the Hudson*, by Thomas Doughty (1793-1856), 1850. Oil on canvas, 34¾ by 48½ inches. Distance achieved by the use of aerial perspective is almost a hallmark of the Hudson River school, of which Doughty was a member. Corcoran commissioned this painting and gave it to the gallery.



A taste of painting is too much Wanting to afford any kind of helps; and was it not for preserving the resembla[n]ce of perticular persons, painting would not be known in the plac[e]. The people generally regard it no more than any other usefull trade, as they sometimes term it, like that of Carpenter tailor or shew maker, not as one of the most noble Arts in the World. Which is not a little Mortifying to me.

Antiques

—John Singleton Copley, c. 1767

ONE OF THE OLDEST and most persistent images of America, at home and abroad, has been as the inheritor of the future. Throughout their history Americans have insisted that the best was yet to be, and rarely have they been disappointed. "Westward the course of empire takes its way . . . Time's noblest offspring is the last," Bishop George Berkeley had written, and the prophecy was repeated decade after decade. "Americans are the western pilgrims," said Jean de Crèvecoeur, "who are carrying along with them the great mass of arts, sciences, vigor, and industry, which began long since in the east; they will finish the great circle." America was, above all, the land of equality. And equality—the great theme which the incomparable de Tocqueville elaborated with consummate mastery—encouraged bold experimentation, for equality rejected the sovereign authority of the past, permitting every person to be his own authority, even in matters of art and language.

The alliance of this land of plenty with a people of vitality imbued American culture with its hardheaded pragmatism, its materialistic utilitarianism, which in turn has profoundly affected the popular attitude toward the arts in this country. As an anonymous early writer in Boston put it:

The Plow-man that raiseth Grain is more serviceable to Mankind, than the Painter who draws only to please the eye. The hungry man would count fine Pictures, but a mean entertainment. The Carpenter who builds a good House to defend us from the Wind and Weather, is more serviceable than the curious Carver, who employs his Art to please his fancy. This condemns not Painting, or Carving, but only shows, that what's more substantially serviceable to Mankind, is much preferable to what is less necessary.

The lack of leisure among a people engaged in conquering a wilderness, the gross materialism fostered by the frontier and industrial capitalism, and the anti-aesthetic bias of our Puritan intellectual inheritance all tended to reinforce an attitude of pragmatism and foster a functional simplicity in the arts.

The role of the fine arts in early American culture was ambiguous and defensive. The basic theme of Copley's letters from provincial Boston was the American artists' discontent with the narrow limits put upon them by a public "entirely destitute of all just Ideas of the Arts." Again and again, painters complained that their talents, meant for the grander themes of history and scripture, were being debased and wasted on portraiture. "Although I am friendly to portraying eminent men," Benjamin West wrote Charles Willson Peale from London, "I am not friendly to the indiscriminate waste of genius in portrait painting; and I do hope that your son will ever bear in his mind, that

the art of painting has powers to dignify man."

Even though the influence of the Puritan theocracy had waned by the early nineteenth century, Americans could not produce and enjoy art without a tinge of guilt. The fine arts had few defenders and no establishment of patrons and professionals to guide their development. The weak status of the profession of painting in Philadelphia was illustrated in the still life *The Poor Artist's Cupboard* (cover), painted by Charles Bird King about 1815. The prominence given to bread and water, frequently associated with the lives of saints, symbolizes the martyrdom of the artist in America. The bread quite appropriately rests on a volume of the *Lives of Painters*, and the books behind the glass of water include Thomas Campbell's *Pleasures of Hope*, Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, *Cheyne on Vegetable Diet*, and an anonymously written *Advantages of Poverty*. A clipping among the papers praises Philadelphia as "the most beautiful, the most hospitable, and the greatest patron of the Fine Arts," but adds that "the art of painting is better advanced by Criticism than Patronage." The Federalist literati argued that America was simply too republicanized, too money-grubbing, too factious, too barbaric for the proper appreciation of polite literature and the fine arts. "To imagine that a refined and classical style of writing will be encouraged here," wrote the high-toned editor of the *Port Folio*, "is as absurd as for a thief to break into a Log House in the expectation of stealing Silver Tankards."

All of this changed after the Civil War with the growth of private fortunes, permitting businessmen and financiers to indulge their crude tastes and vulgar extravagances in widespread patronage of native artists. During the Gilded Age American painters and sculptors achieved a level of prosperity and a degree of respectability heretofore unknown as they joined a vast benevolent alliance forged to improve the nation's manners and morals. Sculptors, such as Thomas Ridgeway Gould, searched for heroic and exotic subjects out of the ancient past which would appeal to these conservative bastions of taste and patronage. In his statue of *Cleopatra* (frontispiece) Gould rejected the cool detached reserve of the ideal Greek style for the more romantic expression and emotional inspiration of the events surrounding the fall of the mysterious, tragic Egyptian queen of antiquity. Soon, however, strong undercurrents of doubt and resistance began to appear in American popular culture. In their frustration, disenchantment, isolation, and even self-imposed exile, many American artists and writers at the end of the nineteenth century demonstrated serious misgivings about and, in some cases, outright rejection of what George Santayana called "the genteel tradition."

Wendell Garrett

Top Bonanzas: Art

«A

*rtistic revolution
by being wholly herself* »

Helen Frankenthaler

BY GENE BARO

When I think of Helen Frankenthaler, I'm apt to think, after a while, of Isadora Duncan. These American women, born half a century apart, made their respective artistic revolutions by being wholly themselves. Isadora sloughed off the many skins of convention to discover the plastic strength of the body. She found freedom and expressiveness in natural movement and gesture and returned dance to a dynamic poetry free of artifice. Helen, as a young painter, threw off the dominating constraints of the art of her time, the isms under which artists labored, and discovered in the fluidity and energy of paint itself an unpremeditated language of form to reflect and express the external world.

Both of these women proposed artistically a daring spontaneousness subject only to the laws of intelligent self-criticism. No theories, no intellectualism, but an endless testing and proving of the self in the search for some universal statement. The risk of an endlessly evolving choreography is matched by the choreography of the brushes and rollers across the limitless space of the canvas. Yet the vision is joyful.

Isadora and Helen are linked in my mind because they are artists who are also and incidentally women. They are not women artists, that mostly sorry lot, a gender apart, defining itself in terms of its apparent opposite. There's

¶¶ **Her canvases are unmistakably hers, a rich amalgam where image is both force and feeling** ¶¶

no trading upon femininity, no denial of it, no exploitation of it; it isn't an issue any more than the color of the eyes, with these two. For Isadora and Helen, there has been one world, the world of artistic achievement, of knowledge and self-knowledge so vividly and intensely realized that it becomes communication. For women such as these, there is no argument about rights, opportunities, relative po-

sition; instead, there is a need to test the self—always against excellence.

This is certainly the road Helen went in the quest for her vocation. She sought out the strong teachers, the tough critics—the Paul Feeleys and Clement Greenbergs—and she looked to herself, too, for her artistic education. She worked at seeing—it doesn't come otherwise. As a student, she was in the museums and at the art openings, and she tested her perceptions in the studio. She had the necessary enthusiasm for what was difficult.

How easy it might have been for someone placed as she was—cultured home, good schools, abundant means, sophisticated contacts—to have been a talented follower of the avant-garde. She might have joined the legions of American Cubists, joined the more clubby Surrealists, or expanded her ego, if not her vision, with the Action painters.

Helen Frankenthaler had admirations—Kandinsky, Gorky—but no masters. When she confronted the paintings of Jackson Pollock, the experience changed her life, not by making her an imitator of what had moved her but by turning her more sharply and (Continued on page 144)

critically inward. She understood, as certainly none of her contemporaries did, that Pollock's drip method was only the preamble to a reconsideration of the painting medium. Pollock's skeins of dripped and thrown paint, so free and yet so controlled, organized the pictorial surface without traditional composition. The trailing paint ungoverned by brushstrokes suggested that painting and drawing might inhabit a single gesture. The dense energy of Pollock's surfaces, the sense of pictorial space being at the same time expanded and consumed, announced that the painting might seem greater than the sum of its parts and the experience of it reach beyond the literal limits of the canvas.

Pollock's method was nevertheless intensely personal. No one could paint quite as he did without seeming a follower. It remained for Helen Frankenthaler to liberate the underlying insight from Pollock's webs of paint. She understood, perhaps instinctively at first, that the language of paint, its expressiveness as related to nonrepresentational art, was essentially its character as a fluid medium. Paint free of the loaded brush might be thinned and poured, might be moved by a variety of means, in varying densities, to echo the conditions of light, to echo shapes seen at varying distances and in varying atmospheres, to seem movement itself as drawing was scaled to the energetic gestures of a broad calligraphy.

When Helen Frankenthaler painted "Mountains and Sea" in 1952, she thinned her pigment and soaked it into unsized cotton duck. By seeming to bind the thinned layers to the weave of the canvas, she gained both light intensity and spatial tension that orchestrated the flow of shape and calligraphic incident across the canvas. This painting had, and has, a buoyancy and lightness that is almost dancelike, so vibrant is its atmosphere. But admiration for the painting was nothing to appreciation of its method. The soak-stain technique became an active verb in the grammar of contemporary art.

Helen simply went on from there. Her discovery was widely imitated and adapted; it has lent itself, seemingly, to infinite modification as a couple of generations of artists and some of the finest of our time have taken to thinned pigments and cotton duck for their own purposes.

For Helen, method led to a personal style. Her canvases are unmistakably hers, a rich amalgam where image is both force and feeling, whether the subject is literal landscape or seascape or some imagined extension of visual experience.

To begin with, color was not a

salient ingredient in Helen's work. It was drawing rather than color that provided the pictorial architecture. But color has grown more complexly a part of her paintings, especially as these have come more to reflect a sense of landscape on the grand scale. There, color is the binding atmosphere, the incandescent ribbon that marks the distance.

A Frankenthaler painting is also apt to excite us by its rightness of scale. Whatever the format, whatever the size, the sense of the visual experience is likely to be a large one. With Helen, a big idea may be painted small, but a small one is unlikely to be painted at all. There's none of the visual inflation that makes so many contemporary paintings look like slices of cheese.

The personal energies of the artist are always at the heart of the work. Given that the artist does the work alone, its physical limits are his or her physical limits. With Helen (as with Isadora) the particular quality of the energy is all-important. A Frankenthaler painting is nothing more nor less than a record of the artist's involvement. In a sense, she is endlessly bending above her canvas as it lies on the floor. She is pushing the paint this way and that, brushing it, rolling it, with the reach of her arms and the heave of her shoulders making it do what she wishes it to do. Her gestures are like a dancer's gestures, for in the end they define all. ▽

SUNDAY, APRIL 27, 1975

Corcoran Gallery: Been Down So Long, It's Great To Be Up

By Paul Richard

The Corcoran Gallery of Art, which has been described so often as "the financially troubled Corcoran," appears to have reversed the trend that was driving it towards bankruptcy.

It is no longer losing money. It is, as of this writing, operating in the black.

Audited figures made available by David Lloyd Kreeger, who became president of the Corcoran a year ago, and Roy Slade, its director, show that in the six-month period ending Feb. 28, 1975, the gallery and the school together accumulated a surplus of \$83,259.

The school, which now enrolls approximately 700 paying students, generally breaks even, but of that \$83,259 surplus, nearly half—\$40,631—is credited

to the gallery. And that is something new.

American art museums are almost never money making institutions. They rarely pay their way. The Corcoran is no exception.

It has been operating in the red every year since 1970. Its operating deficits have totalled \$1,110,329 since the start of this decade.

That drain has now been stanchied. Thanks to cost cutting by Slade and fund-raising by Kreeger and the members of his board, the gallery has a chance of breaking even for the current fiscal year.

"We still have to raise some money, but we are almost there," says Kreeger. There is even a possibility we might show a surplus. What a feeling that would be."

Slade is equally optimistic. "The

Corcoran," he says, "is healthier today than it has been in years."

Fund-raisers, of course, often speak that way. Positive thinking is their duty, and Corcoran officials in the past have often painted glowing pictures of their institution's future. But Slade's and Kreeger's optimism seems in large part based on the dollar signs and figures in the Corcoran's audited accounts.

According to the books, the gallery, in 1970, spent \$810,607. That was \$256,706 more than it took in.

In 1971/72 (when the gallery's accountants began to keep their books on the basis of a fiscal year that ran from Sept. 1 to Aug. 31) the deficit increased to \$265,234. In 1972/73 it increased again, to \$385,868.

Slade, who had been acting director

since November, 1972, when he suddenly replaced Gene Baro, was named director of the Corcoran in June, 1973. He began by slashing costs.

"When I became director," he says, "we were paying more to administrators than to the curatorial staff. I changed that overnight. Our 'fund-raisers' weren't raising enough money to pay their own salaries. They left. By the end of August, 1974, we'd cut costs by nearly a quarter of a million dollars and the deficit had diminished accordingly."

"This year," says Slade, "I expect we will break even."

The Corcoran, like other art museums, does not increase its income by staging crowd-attracting shows.

In fact, the opposite is often true.

More people mean more guards, more work, more maintenance. An expanded exhibition program requires an enlarged curatorial staff, more paperwork, more money.

All museum directors know the bind: The more they give the public, the more they have to spend.

If the Corcoran this year breaks even, it is only in part due to Slade's rigorous economies. More credit must be given to the fund-raising of Kreeger and his colleagues on the 33-member board.

Already the figures tell the story. The Corcoran has raised \$227,828 in outside contributions in the current fiscal year.

That is vastly more than usual. In 1972/73 the figure for contributions (from individuals, corporations, foundations and trustees) was only \$41,811.

In 1973/74 it was only slightly better, \$58,177. Kreeger, who has already brought in that \$227,828, is aiming for \$260,400 this fiscal year. He has more than four months left and he is almost there.

And much of that money came from Kreeger's pocket and the pockets of his trustees. Last year contributions from all sources, including corporations and foundations, totalled only \$58,177. Already this year, \$78,759 have been given to the gallery by individual trustees.

Meanwhile, as everybody knows, the stock market has been bleak. The gallery's income from its portfolio of investments has dropped from \$91,990 in 1972/73 to an expected \$70,000 for the current fiscal year.

See CORCORAN, G4, Col. 1

But gifts, from a variety of sources, including the National Endowment for the Arts, have nevertheless increased.

As of April 1, 1975, individuals have given \$13,400; trustees, \$78,759; corporations (including such banks as Riggs National, American Security and Trust Co., and Union Trust Co., the law firm of Hamilton and Hamilton, the Jewish Community Center, the National Geographic, B. F. Saul Co., and local gas and telephone companies) have given \$31,169 to the Corcoran. The National Endowment and such foundations as the Meyer Foundation, the Philip Graham Fund, Charles Del Mar Foundation and especially the Cadriz Foundation, have provided an additional \$104,500.

Kreeger, once the head of the Government Employees Insurance Company, now "partially retired," also has been raising more than \$1 million for Washington's National Symphony. He is, there is no doubt, good at getting money.

The secret, he says, is "mix of exhortation and example."

The Corcoran's trustees once felt if they'd attended meetings they had done enough. I told them it was not enough," he says.

He admits the Corcoran's future is still a bit uncertain. The current level of community support will have to be maintained if the institution is to prosper, says Kreeger, and the federal government will have to play a role.

"Cleveland, Detroit, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles—all these cities have

an industrial base to draw on. Washington has the government. It's the city's main employer. Other cities can expect some state support. Washington can not."

Still, when he speaks about the future of the Corcoran his optimism is infectious.

Kreeger says the gallery, which swelters in the summer, "has to be air conditioned — and soon." He is even willing to suggest that the million-dollar job might well be completed by the time the Bicentennial tourists pour into the capital in the summer of 1976.

Some \$15,000—half of it provided by the National Endowment—is paying for a feasibility study that is now underway. Kreeger says that architect Hugh Newell Jacobsen, a Corcoran trustee, believes the air conditioning machinery can be installed beneath the gallery's skylights.

"Now the gallery can only function nine months every year," says Kreeger. "That has to be corrected."

There are additional signs of institutional health apparent at the Corcoran.

The curatorial staff has been increased. Jane Livingston, formerly of the Los Angeles County Museum, has joined the Corcoran as chief curator.

Slade, to his credit, has gone to the community for additional curatorial expertise. Gene Baro, his predecessor as director, has organized a number of Corcoran exhibitions, among them the Frankenthaler show currently on view. Neta Dorrance, who ran the Jefferson Place Gallery, now closed, judged the Corcoran School's student exhibition that is now on display.

And the gallery's acquisition program has been resurrected. "We intend

to spend some \$40,000 buying art for our collections in 1975," says Slade.

An \$8,000 painting, "T-Beam," by Ron Davis of California, has been purchased by the Friends of the Corcoran from the 34th Biennial for the gallery's collection.

More than 1,300 people attended the Corcoran Ball earlier this month (the tickets cost the partygoers \$55 apiece), and the Women's Committee, sponsors of the event, will spend a portion of the proceeds on additional acquisition.

In 1971, the only Corcoran purchase was a set of drawings by John Dowell that had been slightly damaged in a gallery exhibition. In 1973, the Corcoran bought one photograph, by Ernest Gowin. Since the start of 1974, however, more than 20 objects—among them works by Anne Truitt, Neil Maurer, William Christenberry, Robert Stackhouse, Mimi Herbert, Rockne Krebs, Sam Gilliam, Ansel Adams, Walker Evans, William Eggleston, Robert Gordy, Robert Smithson, and Augustus Tack—have been bought for the collection.

Asked about the problems that he faces, Slade speaks, as Kreeger does, of the continuing need for money, especially for renovation. But he also notes that, since January, 1973, the Corcoran has mounted more than 90 exhibitions, has increased its membership from 2,056 to 3,616, and has started spending money on local works of art.

"We pinched pennies here for years," says Slade. "Now some money is coming in. And the Bicentennial should help us. We have a superb historical American collection. We're ready to take off."

Corcoran Biennial is 'spare, cerebral and flamboyant'

By LINCOLN JOHNSON

The history of the Corcoran Biennial Exhibition of Painting in Washington goes back to 1907 and it is a history of which those who are or have been associated with the Corcoran are quite justifiably proud. For, if conservative taste has frequently prevailed, the biennial has with reasonable frequency brought together some of the best examples of American painting, and the roster of exhibitors, some of whose work is on exhibition in the permanent collection, is impressive indeed.

Originally, the participants in the show were selected in part by jury, in part by invitation, a practice that continued until 1967, when all exhibitors were invited to participate by the director.

The present director, Roy Slade, elected to follow this method and invited 50 painters to submit one work each. About half of those selected were participants in earlier biennial exhibitions; the rest appear for the first time in the biennial, though a number have exhibited at the Corcoran previously.

There are obvious limitations in such a method of selection, of course, but it does make possible the kind of coherence this show exhibits. And though anyone might quarrel with the roster of artists selected and the fact that the selection ignores some interesting aspects of current figurative painting, the show does provide a wide and significant spectrum of current styles.

More important, the show is full of energy and grandeur and it demonstrates how works of quite divergent appearance—the reticence of Ann Truitt's white on white painting and the exuberant expansiveness of Sam Gilliam's conquest of a whole gallery—may resemble one another in the way they strain at limits or burst beyond them.

About half the show is given over to well-established artists whose works exemplify most of the major developments since World War II, with Ludwig Sand-

er's "Chickasaw," an elegant jewel-like geometric painting, establishing a link with the pre-war past. There are works by the abstract expressionists who emerged in the Fifties, such as De Kooning, Motherwell, Brooks, Hartigan and Frankenthaler; by painters associated with optical effects, such as Poono and Anusiewicz; by pop artists Warhol, Indiana and Wesselmann; color painters Noland and Davis; photo-realists such as Chuck Close, and a number of artists working on the fringe.

One of the most striking aspects of the show is what might be described as the theatricality of much of the work. It is most explicit in Wesselmann's gigantic "Still Life No. 60," the various parts of which are painted on separate units such as stage flats. It fills one end of the Corcoran's court and transforms the spectator into a Lilliputian put down on a giant's dressing-table.

This theatricality is apparent in Sam Gilliam's "Three Panels for Mr. Roberson," stained and splattered and draped sections of canvas that invite the spectator truly to get inside the painting. It's apparent in Edward Moses's room-size green wall surmounting a scaffolding and in Alan Shield's "Ohio Blue Tip," a free-standing hut-like structure in which the transparent and translucent materials of tone and space.

Paul Sarkasian's nearly life-size store front, a meticulously painted tour de force of description, which poses questions about the distinctions between photography and a painting, is like a fragment of a set. And Warhol's 14-foot-high "Mao" is like something meant to be used in a political demonstration.

Whatever the internal value of these works, all of them insist on the spectator redefining his relationship to the work of art. So, too, do Gene Davis's colored stripes on the walls of the rotunda and Alvin Loving's torn and painted pieces of corrugated board flung across the wall of the balcony and Sol Lewitt's designs penciled on the walls and Joan Bartlett's

See SPARE, B3, Col. 1



Grace Hartigan's "Another Birthday" in the Corcoran Biennial

Biennial is spare, flamboyant

SPARE, from B1

systemic collection of enameled and painted squares.

What distinguishes all of these is that they are like easel paintings escaped from their frames or mural paintings escaped from the normal confinements walls impose and, by their very shape and scale, they demand a relationship between the work of art and the spectator quite different from most paintings.

They are less objects to be observed than settings for interaction.

There is ample precedent for this sort of thing, from Duchamp's "Large Glass" (1913-1923) onward. But what is significant in this show is the number and variety of examples.

That variety characterizes the show as a whole. It is spare, austere and cerebral in some parts, sumptuous and flamboyant in others and, though there are two or three works that seem supremely

empty, it is generally a splendid collection in which the most disparate works seem to exist comfortably and even logically in company with one another, partly because there is scarcely anything in the exhibition that doesn't speak with authority.

If one needs reassurance about the continuing vitality and ambition of American painting, this show surely provides it.

Through April 6.

В ЭТОМ НОМЕРЕ МЫ СОВЕРШИМ ВМЕСТЕ С НАШИМИ ЧИТАТЕЛЯМИ
ПУТЕШЕСТВИЕ В ЧУДЕСНЫЙ МИР АМЕРИКАНСКОГО СПОРТА.

Америка

ИЮЛЬ 1974 / № 213 • 50 коп.

**...КОТОРАЯ ВОСХОДИТ
ЕЩЕ КО ВРЕМЕНАМ ИНДЕЙЦЕВ**



213

AMERICA ILLUSTRATED

«Индейцы племени
сиу играют в лакросс»
(1851), масло,
71 x 102 см. В
середине XIX века
Сет Истман отправился
вслед за Джорджем
Кетлином и другими
художниками на
Запад, чтобы
запечатлеть на полотне
индейцев Великих
Равнин. Игра лакросс
была придумана
американскими
индейцами; позднее
французские колонисты
несколько ее
видоизменили и дали
ей теперешнее название.



«Гол. Йель против
Принстона. День
Благодарения,
27 ноября 1890 года»
(1890), масло,
55 x 81 см.
Известный своими
полными движения
картинами
о Старом Западе,
Фредерик Ремингтон
изобразил бурную
сцену на матче
в Йельском колледже,
где он сам учился.
В те времена в
американский
футбол играли
без форменных
и защитных костюмов

PHOTO CREDITS: 17, courtesy the collection of The Art Institute of Chicago (28, 18-19, left) — in the collection of The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; courtesy The Cleveland Museum of Art, Hiram S. Harbott Collection, studio — collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; right — courtesy Alexis Katsary, courtesy The New York Historical Society, 20, in the W. W. Corcoran Collection of The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Whitney Collection of Sporting Art, Yale University Art Gallery, 22-23, courtesy The Wilson Company; book cover, courtesy The National Art Museum of Sport, New York.

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The Washington Post

The New Corcoran

THE HIRSHHORN is not the only new museum in town. The Corcoran Gallery of Art, having rediscovered its original spirit and purpose, is, in a sense, emerging as a new museum and a most noteworthy one at that. It has become a period piece, filled with marble Indian maidens, Wild West heroics, Niagara Falls lyricism, noble laborers, the new world's townscapes and landscapes — a kaleidoscopic portrayal, in short, of another America, an America that never really was, perhaps, except in the wishful imaginings of its artists.

The Corcoran was chartered in 1870 to "promote and encourage the American genius" so it is fitting that this genius dwells again in William Wilson Corcoran's halls. The halls contain the country's finest and most extensive collection showing the development of American art.

In the past few decades that collection had been sadly neglected. The management was weak and a succession of enthusiastic trustees pushed the old museum rather aimlessly into fashionable avant garde adventures. They confined "the old junk" to the attic and played around with the building's interior architecture to dramatize their occasionally startling but rarely significant displays. A crisis of solvency turned into a crisis of identity.

The Corcoran's new director, Roy Slade, has now managed to change this. The old statuary has been restored to the colonnaded atrium. Galleries which had been boarded up now feature an orderly and impressive progression of the history of American art, celebrating a triumphant revival of long disdained 19th century painting. Another progression of galleries displays respectable and interesting European art. There is still ample and handsome space for contemporary work. The 19th Area Exhibition, the first local Corcoran show since 1967, proves that the gallery has by no means lost interest in the happenings on the Washington art scene.

But the emphasis is on what Roy Slade calls "the lineage" of American art, on the nation's artistic continuity. This national emphasis gives the Corcoran new national, as well as local, standing. It will make an important contribution to the nation's bicentennial.

The Corcoran's troubles are not over. A private institution, it receives no regular federal or local public funds. Private funds are still short. The old building needs repairs. The annual deficit to keep the museum open and active amounts to \$250,000 a year. An enlarged and energetic board of trustees is working hard to raise more money. It needs help and its new national standing entitles it to national support.



By Matthew Lewis—The Washington Post

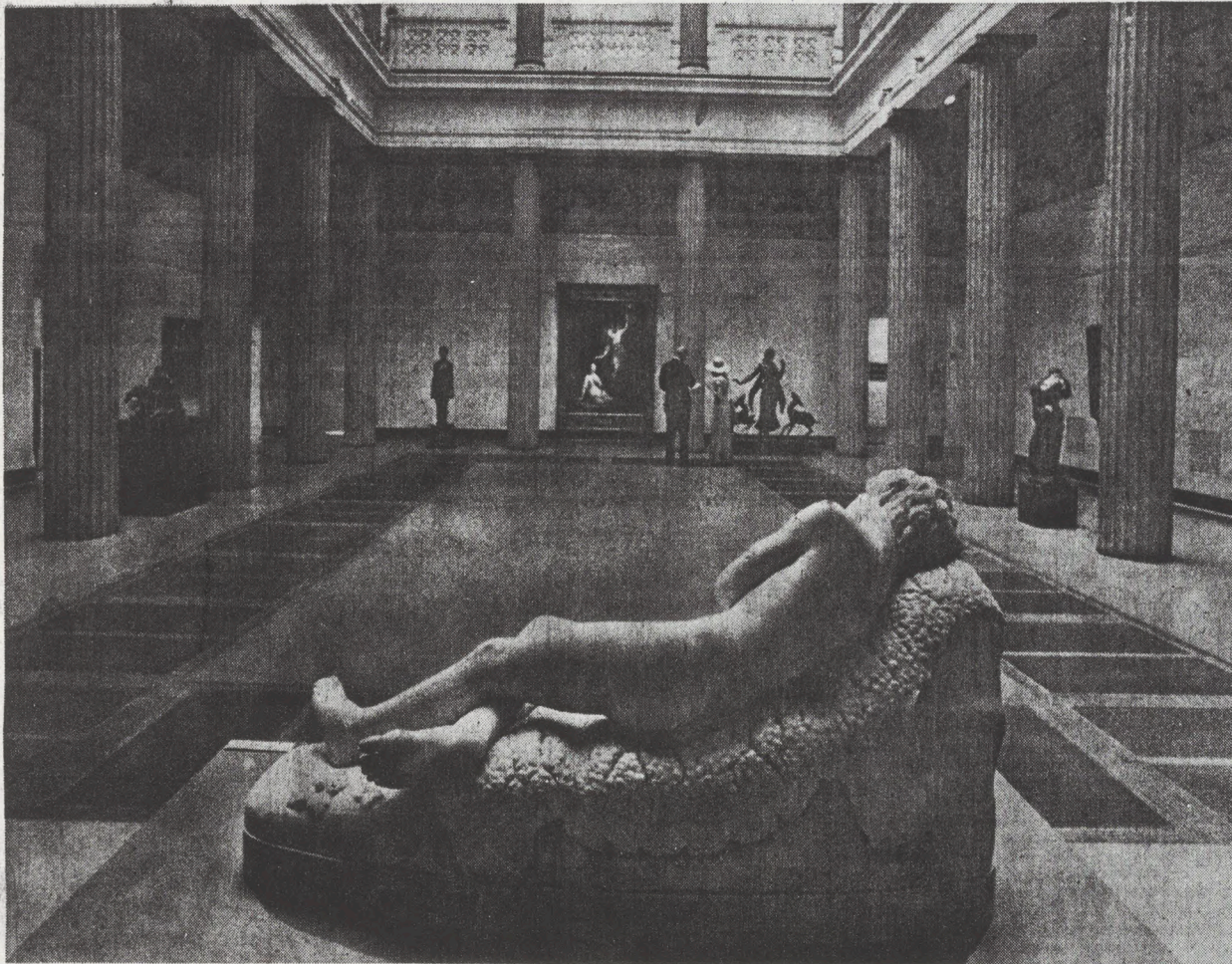
October 25, 1974

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The Corcoran's atrium: back to the 19th century.

—Star-News Photographer Francis Rount

Come, Praise The Corcoran's New-Old Look

By Benjamin Forgey
Star-News Staff Writer

Three new art exhibitions were unveiled last week to open the season at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, but the main show was the place itself — the building, the institution, the permanent collections.

Bits and pieces of Roy Slade's vision of the Corcoran have been seen during the past year, his first as full-time director. However, work done during the summer completes the view.

The visitor need go no further than the ground-floor atrium to realize that the razzle-dazzle is gone, that the Corcoran no longer sees itself primarily as a gallery of contemporary art, a signpost of what is newest and best in art from Washington and elsewhere around the country.

GONE ARE the bulky, room-size boxes at either end of the atrium — temporary rooms that doubled as expedient storage space and backdrops for large, contemporary paintings. Where Dene Davis's "Junkie's curtain" used to hang, there is Daniel Huntington's "Mercy's Dream," a bit of popular fluff from the mid-19th century illustrating an episode from "Pilgrim's Progress." At the northern end of the atrium Bierstadt's portrait of "Mount Corcoran," the western peak named after the gallery's founder.

The period flavor of the place is further heightened by sculptures placed on pedestals in the interstices of the columns, echoing the days when the atrium was lined with plaster replicas of classical statues.

The Corcoran obviously has rearranged its priorities, and, just as obviously, the advantages of the rearrangement outweigh the disadvantages. It really was — and still is, for that matter — a question of institutional survival.

THE FIRST and most important advantage of the new program is again to put the Corcoran's permanent collections in their proper place in the institution's order of things, and this is the place of honor. It hardly needs saying again that the Corcoran is one of the country's finest repositories of American painting from the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries.

What does need saying is that no longer are 19th-century galleries lopped off willy-nilly and closed up for storage. No longer does one hear panicked, dispir-

See CORCORAN, D-3

CORCORAN

Continued from D-1

ited whispers about selling off the permanent collection to the Smithsonian or Texas or whoever might bid the highest.

Instead, one is treated to a series of bright, clean, restored galleries where an important part of the history of American culture is systematically displayed. In addition, the gallery's spotty but by no means negligible holdings of European art (the result of two large family bequests) are no longer hidden away like untidy embarrassments. One wouldn't mistake them for the National Gallery of Art, but the Corcoran's European galleries do hold things of consequence: Fine Corots in the rotunda, a wall of Monticellis, and two remarkable Terborch portraits, among others.

A SECOND and perhaps less obvious advantage of the new order at the Corcoran is the new respect accorded the building itself, a Beaux-Arts monument designed by Ernest Flagg and completed in 1897.

What a marvelous building it really is. Flagg obviously could not have intended it, but those high-ceilinged, sky-lot galleries that surround the atrium on the second floor are triumphal spaces, unexcelled anywhere in the world as arenas for the exhibition of modern painting. And though I'm not entirely taken with Slade's use of the lower atrium as a period piece, I hail without qualification the destruction of those temporary storage rooms at either end. Once again one can experience the space whole, and realize that, somehow, its stately bravura represents in itself an invaluable piece of cultural history.

Slade's bold organizational touch is apparent through all of this. It is most pronounced in the erection of a much-needed ground-level orientation room where visitors are provided with schedules of gallery events and clear, coded maps of just what is where in the meandering series of galleries behind the rotunda. (There's red for the permanent American collection, blue for the European, and white for temporary exhibition galleries.)

ONE OF the more obvious disadvantages of the reorganization is that space available for temporary exhibitions has been drastically cut back by some seven galleries. Special exhibitions were, and must remain, the heart of the Corcoran's program in contemporary art.

There is a certain inevitable logic to this course of events. The Corcoran, facing grave money difficulties in the late 1980s, took giant steps away from the past and moved toward the new, the avant-garde and the experimental. The institution abandoned an old audience (and in the process virtually abandoned its permanent collections) and failed to find a new one sufficiently numerous (or munificent) to keep the place going. The result, compounded by amazingly bad management, was a money problem that moved from grave to ruinous.

Now, under Slade's direction and that of an enlarged board of trustees, the Corcoran is steering an even middle course — a responsible course and, perhaps, the only course really possible. But it is ironic that in the changes brought on by the '60s, the Corcoran absorbed the Washington Gallery of Modern Art up on 21st Street near Dupont Circle.

TODAY that building houses studios for advanced students of the Corcoran School, and today, with the Corcoran's bright, new look & a new old look, as befits the times — the need for an independent, forward-looking, adventurous institute of contemporary art in Washington is more apparent than ever.

The question might be asked, "Who needs it?" The answer: The hundreds of independent, adventurous artists working in Washington. But the question also is



Daniel Huntington's "Mercy's Dream," where Gene Davis's "Junkie's Curtain" used to hang in the Corcoran.

to support a more vigorous, venturesome course in the arts.

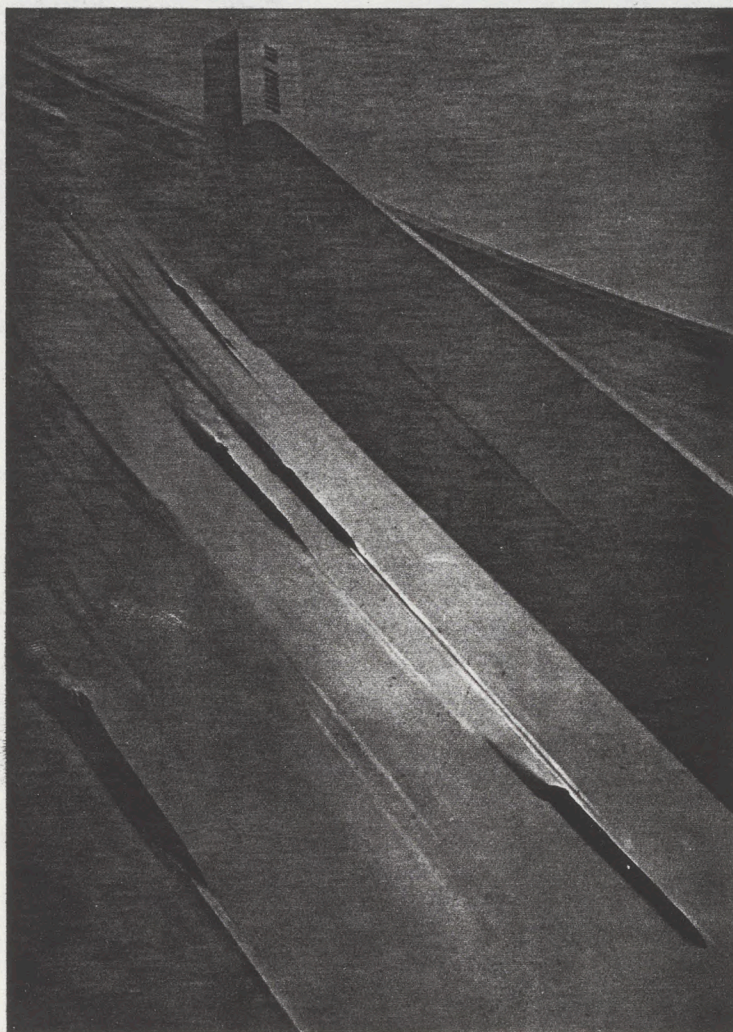
For the time being, the artists will more or less have to go it alone, with whatever support the Corcoran and other institutions can offer.

SLADE can point with pride to the fact that the Corcoran's new acquisition policy will concentrate on contemporary art, and particularly on contemporary art made in Washington. He can demonstrate that the entire exhibition program this season consists of work by living artists. In his opinion, the new will have more meaning now that the old is secure in its place. "This way, people won't feel threatened by it," he says.

The sad fact is, however, that there are obvious limits on what the institution can do in the field of contemporary art. But at least the Corcoran is living up to its moral, legal and civic responsibilities to preserve its collections and its building. These are significant accomplishments, for which we can all be thankful.

TIME

Birthday
Issue



JOHN BUTTON'S SPILLWAY: SHASTA DAM

Face of the Land

American landscape painting languished in the closet until quite recently. The impulse to record the primal shapes of land, vegetation, light, water and sky, enormously important to American art in the 19th century, was tagged throughout the 1960s as regressive, unmodernist, dumb—everything, in fact, that an acrylic stripe on unprimed duck could never be. Photography had taken care of landscape; one could leave it to the *National Geographic*.

But today, with the revival of interest in realist painting, the swing has gone the other way, and recently the U.S. Government gave it a vigorous push. In early 1974 the Department of the Interior approached some 45 artists with the suggestion that they go on location throughout America and paint what they saw, provided that what they looked at fell under the department's jurisdiction: mountains and swamps, plains, beaches, dams, railroads, national parks, sawmills, highways. California's Joseph Raffael went to Hawaii and came back with large paintings of water lilies; New York City's best painter of cityscape, John Button, stood at the foot of the Shasta Dam and rendered its spillway with a blue geometrical clarity; Richard Estes produced a view taken near Philadelphia's Independence Square, *B&O*; the Rockies were full of photorealists in National Park Service Jeeps, and one intrepid soul, Vincent Arcilesi, tethered his easel to the windy lip of the Grand Canyon to record on the spot its labyrinthine wrinkles. The results—78 paintings, first seen at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C.—go on view at the Wadsworth Athenaeum in Hartford, Conn., this July 4th under the title *America 1976*, and the show will tour U.S. museums for the next two years.

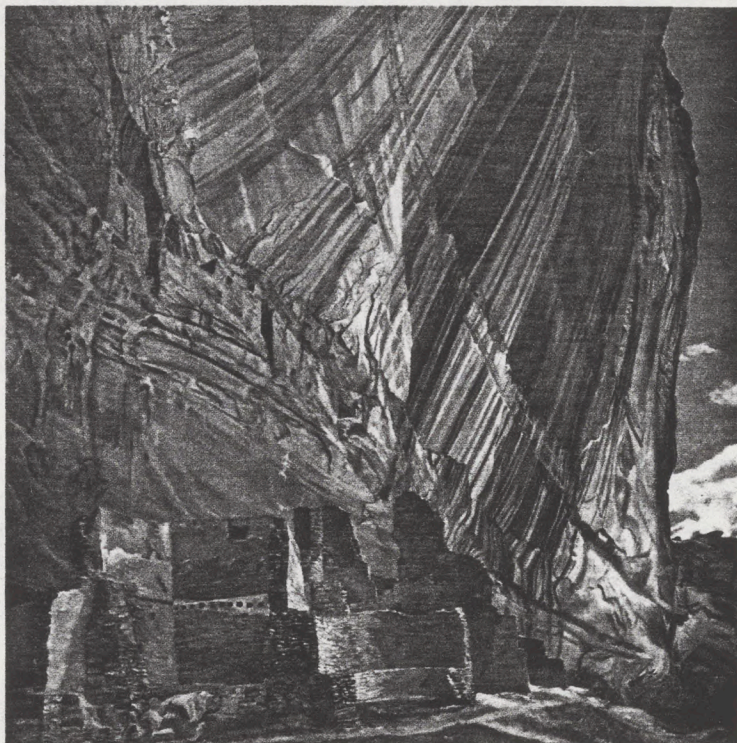
WILLARD MIDGETTE'S POWWOW



ART

It is not, of course, the Department of the Interior's first act of art patronage. The preservation of Yellowstone National Park was largely caused by the public impact of the paintings of Thomas Moran, who a century ago worked at Yellowstone with the department's surveyors. As a project, *America 1976* is heavy with reminiscence of the 19th century, when the language of sublimity was formed from the raw material of landscape by such artists as Moran, Frederick Church and Albert Bierstadt and the indomitable photographers (Edward Muybridge, Timothy O'Sullivan, William Jackson and the rest) who lugged their brassbound cameras thousands of miles to make documents of a nature that had scarcely been imagined, let alone spoiled, by man. The big difference, however, is that 19th century American topography had a use and was conceived in terms of that use: to supply information, the best available.

Not so with *America 1976*. A million postcards have been there before, and the landscape is vicariously familiar. Much of the show appears to have been painted from photographs, whether it was or not, for this is now the natural "look" of most American realism. If the exhibition is littered with home-



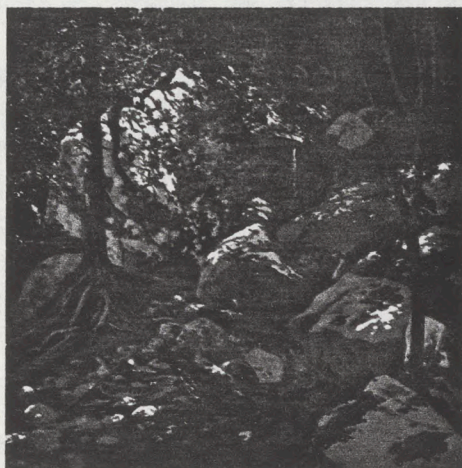
PHILIP PEARLSTEIN'S WHITE HOUSE RUIN—MORNING



RICHARD ESTES' B & O

ART

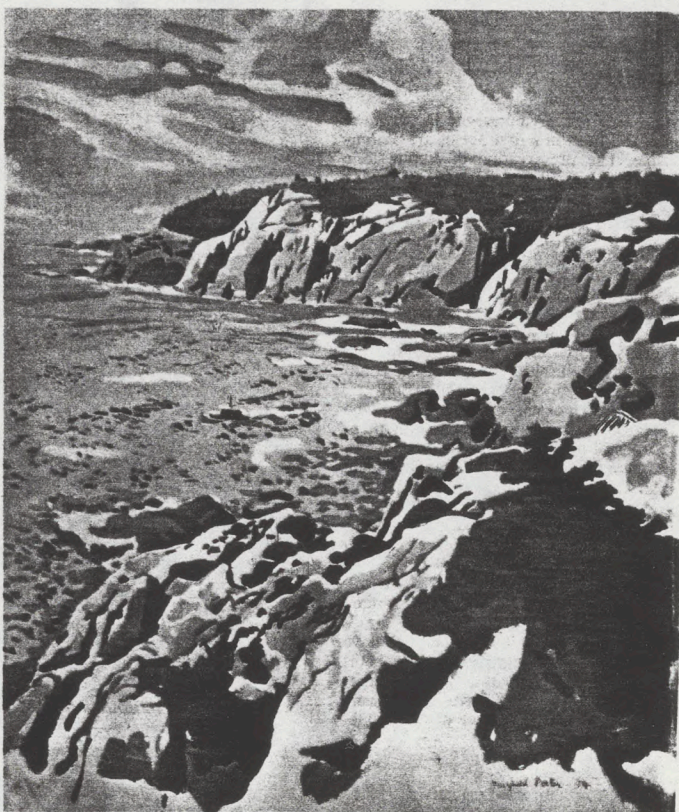
fried parodies of an earlier sublimity, it is because many of the artists could find only a conventional way of producing an "official" heroic landscape. Despite Art Historian Robert Rosenblum's benevolent claim in the catalogue that "in most of these works, the mood is one of exhilarating adventure and head-clearing oxygenation," the paint surface tends to go dead at the timber line: the mountain pictures, like Lowell Nesbitt's 32-ft.-long *Animas Valley*, have a way of turning into generalized bombast. Among the exceptions are Ben Schonzeit's enormous view of the continental divide and a pair of paintings of a Pueblo ruin in the Canyon de Chelly, in which Philip Pearlstein has given the bleached, taffeta-like flutings of the cliffs the dispassionate pore-by-pore inspection he usually reserves for the faces of well-off New York liberals. By the same token, the paintings of fauna and Willard Midgett's enormous, stodgy rendering of a Navajo powwow fall very short of their 19th century prototypes, the exception,



NEIL WELLIVER'S ANONYMOUS FRESHET

again, being a tenderly glittering portrait of a sockeye salmon by William Allan.

The memorable things in the show are the result of an almost domestic and quite unrhettorical vision: Neil Welliver's beautifully controlled account, stroke by fat green stroke, dense as a Courbet, of a glade in the Maine woods; the late Fairfield Porter's *The Cliffs of Isle au Haut*; the scribbled tremor of light on dark water in Jack Beal's large pastel, *Chinco-teague Refuge*; Jane Freilicher's image of the Long Island wetlands stretched in their horizontal green solitude under a mild spring sky. Such pictures are the justification of this ambitious show because they affirm a way of inspecting landscape that only painting—and not photography—can give, offering an imagery through which one can begin to look again at what, being familiar, has almost turned invisible. **Robert Hughes**



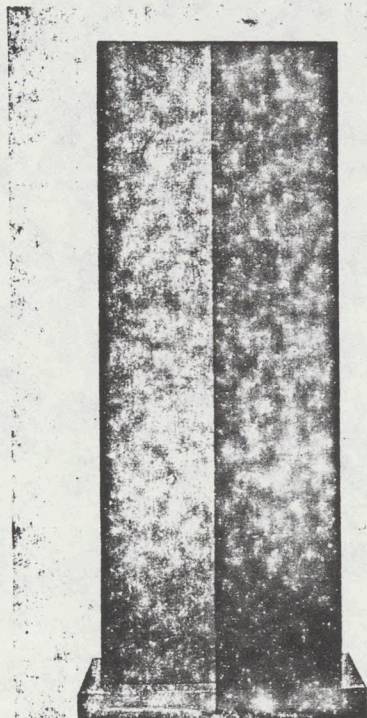
FAIRFIELD PORTER'S THE CLIFFS OF ISLE AU HAUT

JANE FREILICHER'S WETLANDS AND DUNES



ART IN AMERICA
July/August, 1974

Anne Truitt: *Insurrection*, 1962, acrylic on wood, 104 inches high; at the Corcoran.



WASHINGTON

Anne Truitt at the Corcoran

Last December at the Whitney Museum, the Washington-based sculptor Anne Truitt showed 18 sculptures and 42 works on paper reflective of her sculptural ideas. This modest retrospective, covering 1962-73, revealed a fully mature talent working in a difficult and unfamiliar artistic territory—that of color as a plastic or sculptural element. In April, the Corcoran Gallery mounted a much larger Truitt exhibition. Forty-five sculptures were shown—roughly half of the artist's surviving output since 1961—and 64 sculpture-related drawings. The Corcoran exhibition, though more crowded and less easy to see than the Whitney show, was nevertheless more important in allowing visitors to follow the artist's thought exhaustively.

If this sounds a labor rather than a pleasure, keep in mind its importance: Truitt's sculpture bears directly and originally upon color potential in the medium. No sculptor has done more than she with color, and yet

her work is little known. Part of this lack is owing to her having lived and worked in Japan between 1964 and 1967, part to her having had only three one-woman shows in New York during the '60s; 1969 marked her last appearance in a commercial New York gallery. She did not show commercially in Washington until 1971. Her record of museum appearances is not much fuller. Until recently, few of her works were to be seen in public collections.

The work itself is a surprise. Perhaps it presents a problem to viewers in being fully realized, as it seems, from the start—or at least from the start of this retrospective. Actually, Truitt prepared for more than a dozen years before establishing her canon with *First* in 1961. During the 1950s, she had experimented with materials and techniques; she had looked closely at the art of the past and had discussed then-current preoccupations with Kenneth Noland. But all that preparation, with what must have been its tentative steps, is missing from the public record. What we have before us instead is the mature, direct translation into sculpture of complex personal perceptions.

The pieces, like the oeuvre as a whole, are so totally finished that they seem free of any evidence of process. In this sculpture, color elucidates form—not by describing or denying form but by embodying it. The color is not skin but matter, and when not matter, then light.

Except in a few instances, the shapes of the sculptures are severely rectilinear. Many of them are simple columns of various heights and thicknesses; but their existence is not in their object-quality so much as in their sheerly optical presence—scale, intensity and weight. They are like an after-image in seeming to focus a complex scene as pure sensation. It is as if the sculptor had managed to fuse perception and reaction.

Work of this kind requires close attention. It must be slowly experienced, not merely looked at; the thing—the object—must be allowed to "happen." Most sculpture provides a road map to its form and feeling. The piece will tell us what to think of it—heroic, sensual, brutal; it may describe or evoke machines, people, landscape, or suggest forces, stresses, congestion, emptiness. But Truitt's sculpture is not indicative in this sense. Her work is light-inflected, light-involved. A column of blues like *Summer Sentinel*, 1963, will, if you allow it, get you well beyond phenomenal associations into the bluenesses themselves, into their particular interactions, resonances and affinities.

This is not to deny the phenomenal basis of Truitt's sculpture. It can be thought of as the artist's visual life essentialized in formal statements that have expressive ends. *First* takes off from the palings of a fence, as *Southern Elegy*, 1962, does from a tombstone; but the issue of the one is a sensation of regularity given by an arrangement in which each measurement and placement differs from every other, while the latter leads us beyond the genesis of the shape to its indwelling energies.

A number of Truitt's sculptures are double, their backs offering not merely another view, but different elements in a different organization. Color may be constant, bisecting the piece both back and front, for

instance in *Insurrection*, 1962, but the formal effect is dissimilar from the different angle. *Insurrection* has an aggressive face, where the sense of force is externalized, directed toward the viewer; it has a second, quieter face, where the supporting struts seem to draw energies from the foot or base to the perpendicular. Wall alone becomes wall and buttress.

The purely columnar sculptures also show two faces, but here the faces are aspects, expressions. The matte paint surface can seem to cast one plane into shadow. There is a regular evolution as we walk around these pieces or as the sunlight takes them. In a single shape, they nevertheless propose differing weights, depths and densities. Unvarying, they contain change.

Truitt's sculptures need to be sparsely installed, to be viewed each on its own, to stand apart, to speak to surrounding space. The work needs room for one's close communion with Truitt's uncompromising vision.

—Gene Baro

Arena Press
Coverage

HONG KONG
T.V. Times

16-22 Jan. 1980

ZELDA FICHANDLER



The
guiding
light of the
Arena
Stage
company
talks about
the group's
founding
... and her
choice of
*After The
Fall*

by Sheri Tillman

ZELDA Fichandler, co-founder and Producing Director of Arena Stage, has always been committed, in her words, to "a theatre of themes and ideas", one that will engage, challenge and nurture its audiences as well as its artists, one that "brings life to life".

In February, the Arena Stage of Washington, D.C. will "go dark" for only the second time in its long history to "bring life" to the City Hall Theatre when the acting company, technical and administrative staff present two productions as part of the Hong Kong Arts Festival.

Winners of the Antoinette Perry ("Tony") Award for "a shining example of American theatre," not to mention the Margo Jones Award and the National Theatre Conference Award, the names Zelda Fichandler and Arena Stage are today synonymous with the

1980 Arts Festival

revival of the regional theatre movement in the United States. The movement has become the dominant artistic impetus in American theatre, which is now recognised as a legitimate art form rather than a commercial venture, and Fichandler is one of the theatre's leading voices.

But this was hardly the situation 30 years ago. At that time "theatre" was more or less centred in New York on approximately 10 blocks of Broadway and catering to less than 10 per cent of the population. But then something started to happen. "The same idea struck in several places at the same time: why not take theatre out of New York and see what happens?"

What happened was the formation of actors' workshops in San Francisco and in Houston, the Alley Theatre, and the Arena Stage.

"A small reconverted movie house was our first home, but we outgrew it after 55 productions in five years," Fichandler explained. "Then we moved into the ice storage house of a brewery, where we stayed for another five years. It was known affectionately as the Old Vat to remind us of the Old Vic."

When the brewery was demolished to make way for, among other things, the Kennedy Centre, Arena moved to its permanent home. "We built an 800-seat concrete and brick structure in 1961 and ten years later we built another building adjacent to it. It's as large in basic volume, with a five hundred seat end-stage theatre. That gives it a flexible space with one fixed perspective, the audience sitting in a fan around a thrust stage. Four years ago we opened the Kreeger — for David Lloyd — in a smaller, intimate cabaret style."

With a permanent structure for the company and the freedom to choose from any number of theatre designs, Fichandler's choice of "theatre-in-the-round" was a puzzle to the more traditional proponents of the art form. But her explanation quells any doubts that she knew what she was doing.

"I set up the theatre with my professor, Edward Magnum, who had been struck



Arthur Miller: Better understood in today's world

by this form. He was originally from Texas and had seen the Margo Jones Arena in Dallas.

"I had never seen this very strange form, with the playing area in the middle and the audience sitting on all four sides. But he convinced me of its aesthetic value and the idea of ridding the theatre of some of its obstructions: the dead-weight of flaps and scenery that weren't needed to tell the human story."

"The idea was to take theatre back to its tribal beginnings when someone said, 'gather around me and let me tell you how it happened.' We wanted to go back to uniting audience and play in one room in one emotional environment. That appealed to my sense of history and my sense of breaking down that part of history that didn't seem contemporary."

The theatre was built, but gaining a permit became a major problem. "We didn't have any of the defining ele-

ments of a theatre as laid down in the fire code — a fire curtain or a proscenium arch — so they wouldn't give us a theatre licence. We finally managed a 'public performance licence,' but were forbidden to use the word 'Theatre' in our title. So there we were, simply 'Arena Stage' forever more.

"The code has since been changed, but it took our experience to get others to change their thinking."

In a career spanning more than 30 years, Zelda Fichandler has produced most and directed many of the Arena Stage's 250 plays. Although the list seems to cover the entire range of dramatic experience, she insists that there is one common thread running through and guiding her choice of material.

"I'm very curious about what people are like, and what they like under varying conditions. I'm curious about the interplay of human personalities and what we might call

external social and political events and how one relates to the other. And I think this curiosity which runs through my life is probably what motivates me to select repertoire."

"The theatre has an unusual ability of all the performing arts to open up man's awareness of his own internal life and his life in the world at large by role playing — by acting out stories or patterns of behaviour which we recognise because we do the same thing, or don't do the same thing, or hope we don't..."

"So I think my choice of plays, while I hope socially interesting to the audience, comes from this personal source."

After the Fall, which Fichandler considers one of Arthur Miller's "most positive statements on the condition of man's isolation and separateness" and which the company will stage from February 12 to 16, is no exception.

"It was originally done in 1964, just a year and a half after Marilyn Monroe's death. And I think that the sensational, but personal, aspects of the material superceded the value embodied in the text. But I think the play now has a chance of being seen in a new light."

"At that time people used to say that Miller wasn't very good to his women characters. But they are people belonging to an emerging pattern of humanity and I believe that Quentin's search for the causes of his own failure can perhaps be better understood in today's world."

"Miller sets up as the final isolating problem in the world the condition of man's separateness. He equates this with the ultimate evil of the concentration camp and then wends his way through the dilemma we all have of how we make connection through this basic isolated position."

"I think it's a very positive statement which couldn't be seen in 1964 because of the Miller/Monroe relationship. Or perhaps the production forces at that time lived in a different world. But I'm interested in bringing these aspects out now, and I hope we can do it." ■

Arena Stage: The Personality Of a Regional Theater

The Personality of Arena: Zelda Fichandler and the Making of a Regional Theater

The arrival of the Arena Stage subscription brochure each spring is one of the most eagerly-awaited events in the theatrical year. Announcement of the plays for the upcoming season at Arena always stirs one's imagination and curiosity because Arena is known for producing the best of the classics and of completely new plays, often from foreign countries. Even Arena's first season in 1950-51 was an adventurous one, with a combination of plays like *"She Stoops to Conquer"* with *"Mr. Arcularis"* by Conrad Aiken and Diana Hamilton. The selections have grown more and more adventuresome as the years have gone by and as the group's facilities have expanded.

Arena's physical history has been a peripatetic one. The theater began in the Hippodrome (an old film house), moved to an old brewery in 1955, opening there, after a year of being dark, in 1956. The Arena Stage building was opened in 1961, and 10 years later the Kreeger Theater was added to the growing complex—which now numbers three theaters with the addition of the Old Vat Room in the basement as a cabaret and experimental theater facility.

Throughout this period the theater has been driven, shaped, and controlled by the artistic and philosophical vision of one person: Zelda Fichandler, the theater's producing director, who through expressing theatrically her own tastes, personality, and drives has unconsciously brought out the differences between and among other regional theaters which, on the surface, appear to be like Arena. "Theaters differ according to the personalities of their leaders," she says.

To understand what Arena Stage is, then, Zelda Fichandler has to be studied.

Studying Mrs. Fichandler is a delight. Dark eyes come at you strongly from their deep setting, and confidence and delight in literate, epigrammatic conversation bubbles over at even the simplest question. To understand Arena's recent history of European plays in translation, for example, it helps to be aware of Zelda's admitted prejudices in drama.

"I was Russian-born, don't forget, and I seem to have been born with that sense of *"Weltschmerz"* which is in the tradition in Europe," she begins. "There is a more

'literary bent' to European plays that I like. I came to the theater through literature. This, I suppose, is the reason why I am so interested in ideas, themes, and people in the plays I like to see done."

Zelda sees more humanism, intelligence, wit, and complexity in the European theater than she does elsewhere, perhaps because of her literary background. At the same time, Arena Stage is doing more for American playwrights than most theatrical groups—and that growth is apt to continue and even expand under the influence of David Chambers, recently named associate producing director at Arena.

Chambers will be aided in his work by another recent appointee at Arena: Douglas Wager, literary manager. It is Wager's job to screen the 800 to 900 scripts that come to Arena each year. Of that number, perhaps 10 will be considered for production or even reach the production stage. In his job Wager sees most of the new work of most of the new American playwrights, as well as a lot by amateurs writing for the stage for the first time.

Selecting the Plays

Most of the serious screening of new plays is done for him by Lucy Kennedy, a writer herself, who was "auditioned" for her position by Zelda Fichandler some eight years ago. Ms. Kennedy knows Zelda's tastes and will suggest scripts for Wager's or her consideration through "script reports"—one-page summaries of the play's action and quality, copies of which are often sent back to the playwrights when scripts are returned.

Some scripts, the ones most seriously considered, are submitted by recognized playwrights' agents, though most are unsolicited. The chances of an unsolicited manuscript getting into production at Arena or anywhere else are extremely small, says Wager. "If a writer has the talent, usually someone has heard of the writing before we get a script." In fact, Wager could not recall an unsolicited manuscript that has been produced at Arena.

"We get some plays which are actually quite well written," Doug Wager says. "But quite often they are unproducible. One of the recent ones that came in was huge—a biography of Jefferson Davis that had 106 characters and took over

six hours to do!" Such an effort demands respect, but it is typical of the difficulty that many American playwrights face. "There is no place to fail," Wager points out, touching on a situation reminiscent of the long-held difficulty of American comedians as well.

Zelda Fichandler points out that, without the literary tradition of Europe, most American writers have to "start from scratch" in terms of plot and subject matter. Equally difficult is the chance to get production experience with a professional company so that the craft can be learned.

"New playwrights just don't know the process of working with a professional cast and crew, and there are not many places where they can find this out," observes Doug Wager. This may have been one of the prime reasons for Arena beginning its "In the Process" series, which started a couple of years ago in the Old Vat Room and which is now in its third season.

The "In the Process" series is dealing this spring with three plays which are as yet uncompleted. The writer is present for all performances of the play and works on it while he is "in residence." The audience and the cast have a chance to talk about the play with its author after the production, and all involved thus learn more from seeing and criticizing the process.

Giving Young Playwrights a Chance

Reflecting the close relationship that Arena has formed with several young playwrights, two of last year's "In the Process" writers are returning this spring—Janet Nepris and Anthony Giardina. In addition, Wager has working relationships with several other writers, one of which has provided the script for Arena's production of *"Gemini"* (by Albert Innaurato), which opened last month. Others have written, are writing, or will write plays that Wager puts in his "must read" category.

Among these are Tony Giardina, who first became known to Wager through an unsolicited manuscript; Richard Nelson, Michael Cristofer, and Richard Lees; and Christopher Durang, whose hit *"A History of the American Film"* opened in late March in New York after being seen at Arena last season.

Many of these younger playwrights

come from the Yale University playwrighting program. Wager is a realist about the reasons for the success of the Yale program. "Let's face it," he says. "Yale gives them the chance to write and be produced with an excellent company."

Once again we get back to the few opportunities for American playwrights to fail. And that failure is often cataclysmic for the writer because of the traditional ways of failure—usually in New York.

Wager's face falls as he describes the effects of a typical New York review on the career of young playwrights, and he talks sadly about one talented young man who has not been able to write since his first New York play was scathingly reviewed. Wager sees the "In the Process" series as a way out of this "life-or-death" situation since it provides writers the chance to be "king" for three weeks. This year's series, in fact, is breaking the "small cast" barrier heretofore in effect, with one new play demanding 15 characters.

Stress Premières or Repertory?

Arena Stage presents new playwrights, but that is not its chief job. It attracts the public that it does because of the excellence of its plays and production, no matter what the source. And in recent years Arena has had some success with shows it began—notably "The Great White Hope," "Raisin," and, most recently, "A History of the American Film."

The day of competing for world premières seems to be ending, however. Zelda Fichandler says: "Arena and the-

aters like us grew up in the '60s. We learned to share our toys." Though direct exchange of productions is difficult since the stages are of varying dimensions, it is not unusual for rights to be loosely arranged and for a production of the same play to be mounted in different cities at the same time. This happened with "American Film" and is likely to happen again.

Other than this loosening of restrictions and rights, the regional theater movement is difficult to generalize about,

"We get some plays that are actually quite well written . . . but unproducible. One of the recent ones that came in was huge—a biography of Jefferson Davis that had 106 characters and took over six hours to do!"

Zelda notes. The only thing regional theaters share, says Fichandler, is the idea that "theaters should belong to the people where they live their lives." And in the case of many of these theaters, repertory companies assure that the actors live where their theater is.

Zelda sees the repertory nature of Arena as a challenging limitation which she thrives on. She also sees positive results from the repertory construction, particularly in terms of a unified point-of-view that the actors come to share: "There is a sharing and assimilating of experience which leads to the privilege of finding an identity. That gives Arena

the ability to stand for something. It also gives the actors the feeling that they are at home when they come to work."

Nevertheless, most of the Arena actors find that after several years they are ready to move on. Once they have moved on, they seldom come back. The feeling is distinct that Zelda Fichandler hates to see them go but recognizes the necessity of growth which drives them to other cities, other theaters. In fact, she has a bit of the wanderlust herself, and as a result will be taking a year off from her job as producing director next season.

"I find myself tired of living in the moment," she says. "I want to find a greater sense of continuity, a greater sense of history. I don't want to be so excruciatingly *alive* every minute! I need some privacy, some solitude." Yet when Zelda outlines her plans, it is difficult to see where the solitude is to come from.

"I have invitations to direct abroad—some in Europe, and in the Middle East; there are some teaching invitations, and there is a book that is waiting to be written. The notes are over there." She points at three huge notebooks crammed with notes, clippings, musings, and maybe even some of her early poetry.

"I can't really remember if my poetry was good or not. I tend to doubt it. I did write a couple of plays, one of which was produced; but I knew I had no great talent so I don't want to write any more plays. I'm lucky that way. If I know I can't do a thing, well, I don't worry about not doing it. I was in pre-med school and found I couldn't draw a three-dimensional amoeba from a slide so I got out of that. I would love to be able to do physical things like dancing, and I would love to be able to sing, but I can't." She says, however, that there are those who consider her a good writer. And since she knows she can do it well, she'll give it a try.

How It All Began

To understand the importance of the development of Arena as a permanent theater, it is necessary to set your mind in the 1950's. Professional theater then was New York and whoever else had the gall to call themselves professional—often itinerant actors who made a living by "doing" plays. But in 1950 Arena began and was thus one of the earliest permanent companies outside New

Andrew Davis acts out the poignant tragedy of trying to be funny in Trevor Griffith's *Comedians*, the Kreeger's February offering.



photo by Joe E. Mann

York. From the first a company of some fifteen actors was maintained and, though they rotate in and out and though the number has grown somewhat larger over the years, the repertory aspect of Arena's identity is important to it and to Washington. Unlike other repertory companies in other countries, Arena has held to a policy of doing plays in successive short runs rather than rotating plays during a given period. Directors for these plays are often as permanent as the company, though they often rotate in and out like the players. Two of the more famous of Arena's directors are Alan Schneider and Edwin Sherin, both of whom have developed careers in New York. Recently the Romanian director Liviu Ciulei has begun work at Arena and has had outstanding success.

Since Arena's beginnings the regional theater movement, as it has come to be called, has exploded all over the country and theaters from Minneapolis to Houston and from Boston to San Diego have sprung up, all of them with their own personalities. But Arena remains the only

"I find myself tired of living in the moment. I want to find a greater sense of history. I don't want to be so excruciatingly alive every minute!"

one of them to have won a "Tony" Award and is certainly in the forefront of developments in theater on the administrative as well as the artistic side. One of the reasons for that is the effectiveness of Tom Fichandler, executive director of Arena Stage.

Tom Fichandler and the Fight for Support

Tom and Zelda are legally separated but continue to work together in a formidable fashion—she in the artistic realm and he on the business side.

Tom Fichandler is one of Washington's most eloquent supporters and lobbyists for federal support for the arts and is an effective spokesman for the cause of unification of arts groups, particularly in the area of fund-raising. For his work on behalf of theaters in America, he was awarded the 1975 Arts Management Award.

Tom faces a number of difficulties, along with his colleagues in theater. Foremost among them is the problem of continuing inflation, which hits a labor-intensive organization like theater and a musical organization particularly hard.

GUIDE TO THE ARTS



photo by Joe B. Mann

To this end shall we all come: Hamlet meditates on Yorick's skull in Arena's recent SRO production.

There is simply no effective or long-term way to cut the time of performance and the characters needed for plays or symphonies, and yet the costs incurred increase far beyond the power of the income to maintain pace.

In addition, there are the pressures which theaters like the Arena face in trying to maintain integrity in the face of large-scale competition from government-assisted theaters such as the Eisenhower Theater and the Opera House in the Kennedy Center. On only a couple of occasions in recent times has there been a direct programming conflict, and, at least in one of them, Arena scored a decisive triumph. The occasion was the 1975-76 production of *"Long Day's Journey Into Night"* at Arena and at the Kennedy Center. By all accounts, the Arena production was the more successful.

In talking to Tom Fichandler you do not get an impression of a man who is interested in winning a competition, however. There is a distinct feeling that Tom is interested in the success of all theater, no matter how large or how small. Most important to him appears to be the maintenance of each theater's own sense of integrity and value in its own community; and he feels, as do others in the arts, threatened by the onslaught of commercial theater in the large sense embodied in the Kennedy Center.

The audience and the cast have a chance to talk about the play with its author after the production, and all involved thus learn from seeing and criticizing the process.

Different Audiences

It is quickly apparent that Arena and the Kennedy Center have a different-style crowd. Arena subscribers are generally younger, trendier, more excited about going to see the play than the stars. Intermissions are more concerned with the drama of the stage and less with the drama of political existence or fashion. The feeling is distinctly that of joining a large and curious family for an interesting evening which is often challenging as well as entertaining. There are sometimes "turkeys" at Arena, but the wonder is that there are not more, given the number of experimental plays and new plays Arena does. And when the plays are not controversial or experimental, the productions often are.

Arena hosts more than its own productions; some of its finest moments have come from outside the "family." *"Sizwe Banzi Is Dead"* and *"The Island,"* both South African plays, came here for an extended run in 1975: Emlyn Williams



photo by John Chlumsky

Tom Fichandler: The priority is to maintain the theater's sense of integrity.

has appeared as both Dylan Thomas and Charles Dickens; and Viveca Lindfors brought a stunning one-woman show called *"I Am a Woman"* in 1972. It is entirely to Arena's credit that these shows, often small-scale and more intimate than is often commercially feasible, were brought to Washington at all. Not surprisingly, most of them have been very successful.

One of the questions most often asked about Arena is "Why don't they stay open all year?" Zelda Fichandler gives the best reason: "We can't afford it financially or emotionally." The theater is given a thorough cleaning and repair job, as is the staff. The staff problems have become even more acute this year, thanks



photo by Joe B. Mann

The award-winning *Nightclub Cantata*. Left to right: Joanna Peled, David Schechter, Rocky Greenberg.

to the triple demands made on them for coverage of three theaters, which all have the same curtain times. It is also apparent that, in terms of critical and box-office reaction, this has been one of Arena's strongest years. "*Starting Here, Starting Now*," in the Old Vat Room was extended numerous times and went through two casts before closing late in the winter. In addition, there is the "Liv-

Regional theaters share . . . the idea that "theaters should belong to the people where they live their lives."

ing Stage" program, which takes improvisational theater into the area's schools all year long and which has toured to Boston as well, under the auspices of Boston University. The workshops and teacher-training sessions of the "Living Stage" have served as a free service to Washington for several years. If Arena is the stage of the community, then "Living Stage" is the theater of the neighborhood.

An impassioned moment between Stanley and Stella in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, here with Edward J. Moore and Lindsay Crouse.

photo by Joe B. Mann



The Success of Arena

Perhaps the key to the success of Arena Stage is actually as ancient as the word "success" itself. The people at Arena are successful because they seem to truly care about what they are doing and how they are doing rather than being content with simply having a job. There is a professionalism mixed with fun at Arena that is rare in today's cynical and money-oriented theater system.

If Washington has in any way threatened the cultural domination of New York, it is probably more because of the success of Arena Stage than the building of the Kennedy Center. For what Arena has done is in and of Washington, and in and of theater in America. It has contributed its share of "stars" to the acting profession and to the movies, as well as technicians and directors; and Arena has also consistently maintained high standards of pure theater and an integrity of attitude toward writer, actor, crew, and audience that bears with it long-term rewards.

To become a cultural necessity, an institution has to do more than merely

There are sometimes "turkeys" at Arena, but the wonder is that there are not more, given the number of experimental plays and new plays Arena does.

exist. It must move the community to higher levels of thought, feeling, and action. Arena has done this and, apparently, will continue to do it and in the process bring to a drama-hungry Washington public the highest possible standards of writing and performance.

Arena Stage is and will continue to be a standard-setter for the rest of the coun-

try and for the world in the dramatic environment it has made famous. For Arena Stage fulfills one of the oldest and most necessary functions of theater: It makes the world seem smaller and less threatening by bringing us accurate reflections of ourselves and our brother-residents of this planet through the medium of other residents' work.

That is enough for any theater to do successfully.

—Mike Cuthbert

AND FOR MAY . . .

All three of Arena Stage's theaters are lit this month, capping the busiest season in the organization's history.

International attention focuses on the Arena itself, where producing director Zelda Fichandler has personally directed the English-language premiere of *Duck Hunting* by the late Soviet playwright Alexander Vampilov (being performed May 7 through June 11). One of the Soviet Union's most popular contemporary writers, Vampilov, who died in 1972, has never been produced in the English-speaking world. Using intricately woven memories, *Duck Hunting* probes the psychological mystery of a man adrift and emotionally numb in today's Soviet Union.

Outrageous American comedy is unleashed in the Kreeger Theater, where Albert Innaurato's wacky *Gemini* continues through May 28. *Gemini* is a cascading comedy of human frailties, dealing with the unorthodox rites-of-passage that a 21-year-old Harvard student undergoes when he comes home to South Philadelphia.

Downstairs in the intimate, cabaret-style Old Vat Room, two developmental new plays can be observed in Arena's "In The Process" new playwrights' series. The absence of critics, informal productions, and intense scrutiny and revision prevail in the series, which this month is featuring Sidney Renthal's *Desert Dwellers* (May 12-21), a wild comedy about a hostage situation at an Arizona dude ranch; and next month Anthony Giardina's *Trappers* (June 2-11), a serio-comic drama set in a hospital in the late 1960s.

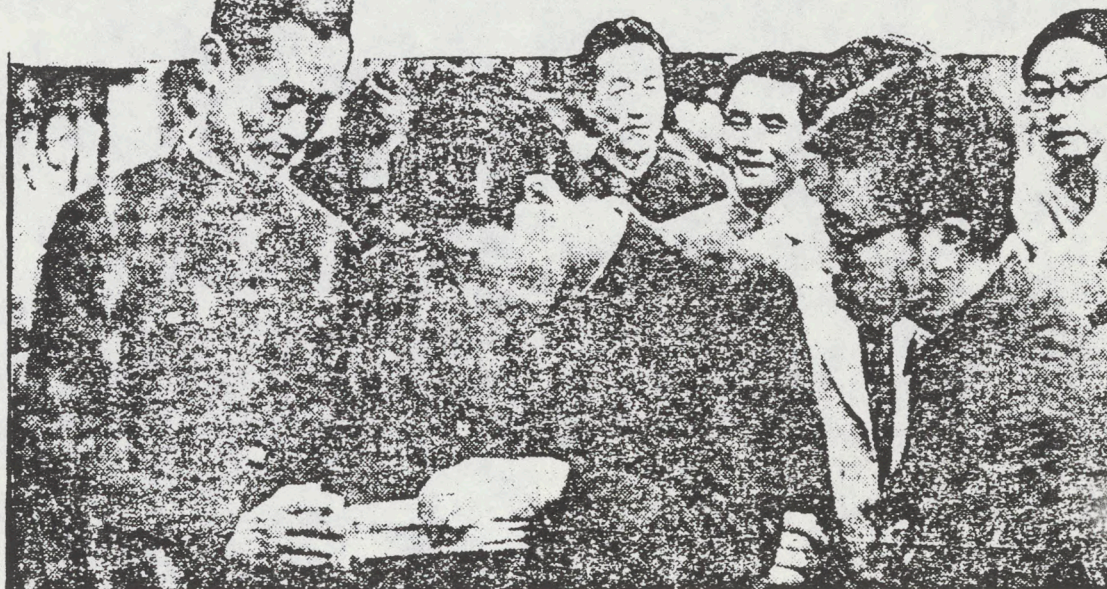
Reservations are strongly recommended for all Arena Stage productions (phone 554-7890). This month is also the first chance to subscribe to Arena's 1978-79 season (which starts next October) guaranteeing assured, choice seating at substantial savings.

—Tom O'Connor
GUIDE TO THE ARTS

The Washington Star
Portfolio

FRIDAY, JULY 21, 1978

Tourists on an American stage



A pneumatic staple gun so thoroughly enchanted a visiting troupe of Chinese arts performers that they broke into spontaneous applause — and crowded around to get a closer look.

In fact, all aspects of seeing a theater-in-the-round provoked wonder or curiosity in a group of 22 touring Arena Stage yesterday. The guests were from the 150-member Performing Arts Society of the People's Republic of China, which, on a six-week tour of five American cities, closes a week-long engagement at Wolf Trap tomorrow night.

It was clear that the group — most of them members of the production staff of the troupe — would like to have lingered longer than their scheduled hour.

David Chambers, associate producing director in charge of Arena, met them in the lobby, where he showed them scale models of the sets for recent productions as an introduction to the operation of Arena's three theaters.

Oriented to the old proscenium arch concept used exclusively in their country, the group

showed keen interest in the four-sided theater and its sophisticated computer-controlled lighting system. It has a television console set up at the stage's edge (used only at rehearsals) which records the change in light spots for the engineers in the booth above.

One technician was curious about "which side of the audience" would see the front door of a house in a stage setting.

They were fascinated with Chambers' explanation of how props and actors are moved up or stage on a moveable platform from a pit eight feet below. Even after the interpreter's translation, they gleefully re-explained to each other with impassioned hand movements, what they had heard.

When shown Arena's neighboring Kreege Theater with the proscenium arch more familiar to them, several wanted to know, "Where's the curtain?" (Chambers told them it was there "but it's never been used.")

And the encounter with the pneumatic staple gun came during a tour of the carpentry shop where scenery technician Jim Glendinnin (below) demonstrated how two pieces of wood can be put together in seconds "without hammer and nails."

— Ruth Dea

The New Haven Register

SUNDAY, MAY 9, 1978

The Theater That Won A Tony Washington's Arena Stage

By ALLAN LEWIS

A special Tony Award was granted this year to the regional professional theater that had made the most significant contribution to the American stage. It was the first time such an award had been offered and represented long overdue recognition of theaters not immediately associated with the New York scene. The award went to the Arena Stage of Washington, D.C. In the preliminary voting I cast my ballot for our own Long Wharf Theater for its high level of performance, the directorial insights of Arvin Brown, but mostly out of local pride. But Arena Stage won by a decisive margin so off I went to the nation's capital to see how another regional company functioned and whether I could justify my own choice.

The Arena Theater well deserves the honors bestowed upon it. It is an outstanding example of consistent growth, high artistic standards, and above all identification with the community. Located near the Tidal Basin waterfront in a rapidly growing residential district, the company operated two separate theater buildings and is in the process of constructing a third. The theaters are owned by the company and have adequate space for scene construction, storage of properties, and rehearsal room. The Arena Stage is completely in the round whereas the second theater, the Kreeger, functions better for proscenium productions. Seating capacity is in the 500 to 750 range and provides a nice sense of intimacy. Both

are clean modern buildings with ample foyers, pleasant surroundings and adequate parking facilities. Some twenty years ago, Zelda Fichandler, the producing director and organizational genius of the company, launched the theater in a run down deserted brewery in the wrong end of town. Today, the Arena is an established cultural asset of the nation's capital,

has a large and steadily growing subscription audience, produces a minimum of eight plays each season combining plays of the past with a sprinkling of new works, and has retained a group of actors and directors who work together with professional precision and pride.

In addition to revivals of plays by Ibsen, Chekhov, Shakespeare and Arthur Miller, the company has been responsible for the world premiere of "The Great White Hope," "The Madness of God," "Boceaccio" and the first English language presentations of Gunter Grass' "Uptight," Max Frisch's "A Public Prosecutor is Sick of It All," and a new Soviet work, "The Ascent of Mount Fuji." The two current plays are Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot" and Peter John Bailey's dramatization of Ray Bradbury's novel "Dandelion Wine." Two more sharply contrasting plays would be hard to find. "Godot" is a modern classic of emptiness, despair, and man reduced to waiting for someone called Godot. Two tramps, Didi and Gogo, wait by a barren tree on a deserted landscape for someone who may never appear for whom they must go on waiting. "Godot" is austere classical in structure with delicately balanced verbal rhythms, occasional lyric outbursts and an overwhelming mood of the "gravedigger holding the forceps."

"Dandelion Wine" is a realistic series of vignettes depicting the life in Green Town, Illinois (a literary title for Waukegan) in the summer of 1928, showing the growing up pains of teen-age boys, the quiet joys of shared love, the anguish of watching the old die, and the beauty of remembered experiences in a small town Mid-America, an "Our Town" with simple props, choral outbursts by the entire cast, and wry philosophic comments by the ubiquitous Narrator.

In "Waiting for Godot," there are no female characters, for survival of the race is hardly desirable when man is reduced to trivial physical actions of eating, urinating, tying shoe laces, picking lice out of his bowler hat, and waiting not with the dignity of a hero but with the pathetic submission of a clown. Howard Witt and Max Wright who play the central roles and are on stage all the time are gifted actors who give way unfortunately, most likely at the suggestion of the director Ciolek Lessem, to the temptation of faking in waiting by overacting. They are never still executing pratfalls, comic routines, hat tricks, playful dance movements, all of which fit in with Beckett's plan, but there must be the contrast

of non-action and silence. This production became a vaudeville act and weakened the overhanging sense of despair and futility.

With "Dandelion Wine," the three young boys were outstanding in a large cast. Rarely have I seen such natural performances by juvenile actors. They dominate the first half of the play and carry it off with grace and laughter, playing games in the backyard, climbing ladders to their attic bedrooms, listening patiently to the tales of the aging Civil War veteran, and broken with sadness when a dear friend is forced to leave for another town. Ray Bradbury writes tenderly of green apple trees, the gathering of dandelions for spring wine, a boy running to fill a dipper of cold water, "the boy hid in the man playing in the fields of the Lord on the green grass of other Augusts in the midst of starting to grow up, grow old, and sense darkness waiting under the trees to seed the blood."

The entire production was smooth and efficient, and captured with joy and sadness the fantasy of the American dream. The dramatization, very much like what was done to Long Wharf's "House of Mirth" suffers from being tied too closely to the novel. Scenes unfold but dramatic unity is lacking.

Both productions played to capacity houses, mostly well dressed middle class

audiences. I mentioned to Tom Fichandler, the capable business manager and husband of Zelda, that considering the composition of Washington's population I had expected to see more blacks and young people in the audience. He replied that blacks do attend but much depends on the show. For "The Great White Hope," a play about Jack Johnson the heavyweight prize fighting champion, blacks did come to the theater but the problem of attracting new audiences still remains. Arena Stage is solidly entrenched in the life of the capital and feels its responsibility deeply. Works in progress are being shown in the Vat Room, to encourage playwrights and audience discussion. The company for both plays I saw was excellently trained with a fine sense of ensemble acting. This year, the eight plays offered ranged from O'Neill's "Long Day's Journey Into Night," George Bernard Shaw's "Heartbreak House" to the Moss Hart-George Kaufman "Once In a Lifetime" as a concession to the Bicentennial. The theater though like all permanent institutions faced with financial needs is able to plan next season without the overhanging dread of wasting its energy in fund raising. The Arena Stage is worthy of the Tony Award. With the Kennedy Center at one end of town and Arena at the other, Washington has become a vital theater center.

The Washington Post

Applause From Broadway

A SPECIAL TONY award will be presented in New York soon to Washington's Arena Stage. Actors Al Pacino and Jane Fonda will hand it to Arena's producing director, Zelda Fichandler, on ABC television at 9 p.m. April 18. The Tony award is the "Oscar" of the legitimate stage; it is more properly known as the "Antoinette Perry Award."

This event should be especially pleasing to Washingtonians. Ever since it opened 26 years ago in the dingy Hippodrome, opposite the Old Public Library, Arena Stage was surely our theater. More than the National or any of the smaller houses, and surely more than the grand, federal festival hall known as the Kennedy Center, Arena is a part of this town, as much as the C & O Canal. Zelda Fichandler has always wanted it that way. She wanted Arena Stage to be a community effort, a "colloquy among people." Arena is not a stage "you need to paste glamor on," as Mrs. Fichandler puts it. A resident company, it has, almost inadvertently, produced some glamorous show people of national fame.

But glamor people did not produce Arena Stage. It is part of the Washington region's culture in the sense

that it cultivates the local intellectual and emotional soil, bringing "life to life," in Mrs. Fichandler's words. This occurs not only under the footlights of the Arena and the Kreeger, but also in ghetto schools and the Old Vat. The Old Vat is a basement room, named after the now-demolished brewery where Arena performed for four years until its handsome building in Southwest was opened in 1960. Here the company performs and discusses plays "In the Process." To the schools, the company takes "Living Stage," improvisational children's theater.

Arena Stage grew during this city's and the nation's cultural awakening and led the way for similar regional theaters across the country. This is why Arena is now receiving a special Tony Award. The awards are presented each spring by the American Theater Critics Association to the best play, musical, director, actor, etc. In the past, this has always meant the best in New York. This is the first time the Tony has strayed that far off Broadway. As the citation says Arena Stage has "enriched the Broadway scene and the theater film and television art across America."

Editorial, April 10, 1976

The Washington Post

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1976

A Tony for Arena

Washington's Arena Stage has been chosen to receive the first Tony award ever presented to a regional theater. The award will be presented at this year's Tony awards ceremony, to be televised nationally by ABC on April 18 at 9 p.m.

The award, one of a number of "special" awards to be given by the American Theater Wing, was recommended by the 18-month-old American Theater Critics Association on the advice of a committee representing various sections of the country. Arena was cited for being a "representative" theater and a trailblazer for the other regional theaters that have followed in its successful footsteps.

In the past, special awards have usually gone to individuals—Noel Coward, Barbra Streisand and Leonard Bernstein are among past recipients. Whether an annual regional theater Tony will be established has not been decided.

News of the major American theater award leaked out from London, where, in one of his regular reports for the Times of London on American culture, New York Times drama critic Clive Barnes, a member of the secret panel, mentioned the salute as indicative of the American regional theater's rise.

The Washington Post

STYLE

Arena Stage: A Luncheon in One Act

By Tom Shales

The scene is a nondescript hotel restaurant. It is lunchtime. ROBERT PROSKY and DOROTHEA HAMMOND enter and join A YOUNG REPORTER at a table. PROSKY is a rotund, white-haired actor who has appeared in 108 roles at Washington's Arena Stage during 17 seasons there—a house record. HAMMOND is a short, slightly flighty actress who had a role in the first Arena play, "She Stoops to Conquer," in 1950.

Together they play Mr. and Mrs. Willy Loman in Arena's new production of "Death of A Salesman," the Arthur Miller play that, like Arena, celebrates its 25th birthday this year. It will be directed by Arena cofounder and boss Zelda Fichandler, whom they call "Zel."

HAMMOND begins to toy with the medals on her gray blouse. She got them when Arena toured the Soviet Union last year.

HAMMOND: This is Leningrad, this is Moscow, this is the Baby Lenin...



Dorothy Hammond and Robert Prosky as Mr. and Mrs. Willy Loman in "Death of a Salesman."

PROSKY: I wear this medal and I feel like a revolutionary general or something. (Laughs)

HAMMOND (to Prosky): Did we work first together in "The Cherry Orchard"?

PROSKY: Yeah, it was at the Old Vat, which is what we called the converted brewery that Arena used for a theater back then. Wasn't it Olivier who named it the "Old Vat"?

HAMMOND: No, it was a dress designer. What was her name? She was very inspired. One day, she said, "Olivier has the Old Vic, we have the Old Vat."

PROSKY: Olivier watched us rehearse once. He was in town when we were doing "Man and Superman." But we didn't get to meet him; he said he didn't want to interrupt us. The actors were so angry!

HAMMOND: Oh, I remember when we were in the old Hippodrome, where Arena first started. It's now a porno movie house. In those days, there were all these winos, you'd find them lying down in the street or sleeping in your car. And the way the stage was set up, we had to go outdoors from backstage and around the corner and into the theater to make an entrance. Well, one night, it was "Summer and Smoke," I had this quick change to make, and another actor Lester Rawlins, was supposed to bring it to me. And I waited and waited and waited. Finally he showed up, all bruised and bloody. Lester had tripped over a wino in the alley and fell flat on his face.

PROSKY: You know, Charles Laugh-ton was the first actor ever to speak on the new Arena stage, and only Zel was there to hear it. He was in town making the movie "Advise and Consent." He stopped by and spoke the "war" speech that opens "Henry V": "Oh for a muse of phire..." I wish I had been there.

REPORTER (to Prosky): Is it true you arrived at Arena from New York with only a suitcase?

PROSKY: Two suitcases. (He laughs, and dandles with the gnocchi on his plate.) I had read for Zel in New York and she hired me for one play, "The Front Page." I had recently appeared in "Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?" with Ann Corio in Milwaukee, and I consider that the low point of my career. In "Front Page" I played Pinky Hartman, the sheriff, and I am going

See ACTORS, E2, Col. 1

By Linda Wheeler/The Washington Post

Robert Prosky during rehearsals for "Death of a Salesman."

ACTORS. From El

to play that very same damn part when we do "Front Page" later this season.

HAMMOND: Isn't that something?
(She nibbles at her fruit salad, tenderly)

PROSKY: In those days, Arena was doing things like "She Stoops" when nobody was doing "She Stoops."

HAMMOND: With four weeks' rehearsal!

PROSKY: I think I got paid \$75 a week.

HAMMOND: I got \$100 a week.

PROSKY: What!

HAMMOND: Of course an actor can live on almost anything. The great thing about Arena has always been the time you get to work things out.

PROSKY: In New York, there is a week's rehearsal, and a clause in your contract that says they can fire you after five days, so you spend all your rehearsal time worrying that you're going to be fired.

HAMMOND: In New York, you play ingenue roles for years after you should. I came here as an ingenue and soon I was playing character roles at 28! You have to stretch so much; it's so good for you.

REPORTER (lovably): But what did you think of Washington when you first came here?

HAMMOND: Oh! I hated it! I cried and cried! I just sobbed.

PROSKY (composed): You had to get used to the fact that it was a sleepy Southern town. Tom Fichandler went into a grocery store one day and asked for sour cream. The man said, "Mister, when our cream goes sour, we get rid of it."

HAMMOND: They had "white" and "colored" rest rooms in the department stores. It was unbelievable to me! And that I should live here. Oh,

WAITRESS: Who ordered the Tab
cola?

REPORTER: I did. (He accepts it graciously).

HAMMOND: And as for repa.

thought, "Oh, this is going to be a
nothing kind of a theater." I thought it
would be nothing. I never planned to
stay.

PROSKY: I was afraid of Zel at first. She was just so formidable in those days. Of course, anybody in a position to hire you was frightening. Zel always has been very sure of herself, though.

HAMMOND: I liked Zel right away. She always had that orderliness; if she was going to do something, she did it. And so thoughtful. When I lost my first husband, she was the first one at the door. I slammed the door in her face, though, because I just couldn't see anybody.

PROSKY: It took a long time to get closer to her, but she can be very human, very warm. And I certainly don't know how to run a theater.

HAMMOND: I wouldn't know.

PROSKY: Someone said the other day, "You know, Zelda has [guts]."

REPORTER: Oh

HAMMOND: You know, more than any of us. Zel could have gone to New York. A dozen times! But she does not want to leave. She has this continuing vision. I'll never forget the closing night at the old Hippodrome. She made a speech and said, "Someday we'll have our own theater," and the tears! You know if, you believed her when she said that.

PROSLY: I was going to leave once. I was going to make a lot of money in television. And now I do some commercials and a kids' show, "Jabberwocky." But as long as Arena is here, it will be a base for me. The work here is so good. The only thing missing is \$100,000 for doing it.

HAMMOND: Of course there have been bombs, even at Arena. Once at the Old Val we did a play called "Answer the Flute." We had this perfectly lovely rehearsal period, but you could count the people who came to see it. But I've never had a part I hated.

PROSKY: I have. But what always?

amazes me is that you can put tense, volatile people together for 5 weeks and come up with anything!

HAMMOND: We do have this actors' ego thing; we all have it. So I can always tell if it's a part I want to play: the play can be horrible and I won't know it!

PROSKY: Arena rarely starts out with bad material anyway. And the audiences here I think have improved. Arena has been in the vanguard of improving them. I remember when we did "Six Characters in Search of an Author" at the Old Vat and I thought, "Who's gonna come out and see this? But they came in droves."

HAMMOND: We never got the social element. Only now are we becoming chic.

PROSKY: I didn't know we were ever chief.

HAMMOND: Just now

PROSKY: We've got a problem!
nnnnnnnnnnn **REPORTER:** Do you
remember any huge goofs onstage over
the years? (*He smiles*).

PROSKY: Well I never missed a performance, but I missed an entrance once, in "Leonce and Lena." I had just bought a calculator, and there I was backstage playing with it, and missed my cue.

HAMMOND: My slip fell off in "Enemies." I felt it fall and I didn't know what showed or even what color underpants I had on. But I got through it. I dropped a napkin and picked the slip up with it.

PROSKY: Of course, every actor's nightmare is that his fly is open on stage. Now on a proscenium stage it's not such a problem if you have to close it; you just turn away from the audience. But at Arena, there's no where to turn.

HAMMOND: And actors are always tricking each other by saying, "Hey, your fly is open" on stage.

PROSKY: Oh they do not

HAMMOND: I've heard them

REPORTER: (to waitress): The check please.

The New York Times

Two Plays at Washington's Arena Stage About the Work

By JULIUS NOVICK

IN a last burst of activity before closing down for the summer, the Arena Stage, still, as always, a symbol of stability, integrity, and quality in the region theater—is presenting no less than three full-length plays, none of which has yet been seen in New York. On the main Arena Stage (through next Sunday) is "Horatio," a new musical biography of that exemplary American, Horatio Alger.

In the adjoining Kreeger Theater (closing today) is a repertory of two British plays: "Relatively Speaking," a farce by Alan Ayckbourn, and "In Celebration" by David Storey, which is most definitely not a farce. (Mr. Storey is the rigorous realist who recently picked up a number of awards in New York for "The Contractor"; Mr. Ayckbourn's new play, "Absurd Person Singular," will come to Broadway in the fall.)

The British repertory is an interesting piece of programming: two small-cast plays, very different from one another, by two of the most successful of the younger British playwrights. But what is really fascinating about the goings on at the Arena are the deep thematic connections—across wide differences of genre, setting, and nationality—between "In Celebration" and "Horatio."

"Horatio" is not, as might have been expected, a campy romp through the picturesque 19th century. Ron Whyte, its young author, is interested in Horatio Alger, Jr. as the prophet of social mobility and the work ethic, whose dozens of books for boys proclaim the values that have made America great—or, at least, that have made America. By means of a sort of expressionistic vaudeville, Mr. Whyte shows us that these books came out of a miserable, neurotic drunkard, forever oppressed by that familiar figure of 19th-century literature and life: the stern,

gloomy, despotic father.

Mr. Whyte makes his points through a series of brilliant juxtapositions. The show begins with Horatio Alger, Sr., a clergyman, in his pulpit, preaching a sadistically detailed sermon about hell; in the midst of this is brought the news that Horatio, Jr. has been born. "As Thou hast given him to me," prays the father, "so now I give him to Thee." When Horatio, Jr. has grown to manhood, more or less, he asks a young lady to marry him. "Yes," she says, shyly. "No!" thunders Horatio, Sr., suddenly appearing in his pulpit. The actor (Brendan Burke—quite good) who plays this frightening father also plays the benevolent father-figure in Horatio, Jr.'s book "Ragged Dick"—and then is suddenly transformed again

fledged, climactic musical numbers, and it needs some. Furthermore, Mr. Whyte has not steeped himself deeply enough in the period, and several scenes ring falsely as a result.

Worse, after the heavy psychological implications of the first few scenes, in which Horatio, Jr. grows up under his father's thumb, the scenes of his dissipations in Paris—written and played as broad farce—are as implausible as they are unfunny. The author keeps losing his grip on what he is trying to do. We know that Alger's conflict with his father, his dissipations, his miseries, his books with their sturdy doctrine of "pluck and luck," and the huge American eagle suspended, talons outstretched, over the stage, are all somehow connected, but Mr. Whyte has not been

fatuous, but that it did not amuse me personally. But perhaps it failed to amuse me because it is fatuous. But in any case why should it have to amuse me, if it amuses so many others? This is a problem in critical ethics for which I have no solution.)

"In Celebration" returns us from the bright, cute, middle-class world of Mr. Ayckbourn's farce to that faded-wallpaper country where the modern British realistic drama has flourished for nearly two decades. A coal-miner and his wife have three grown sons. "I spent half my life making sure none of you would have to go down that pit," says the old man; and all three sons have been duly educated into the middle class—at a tremendous personal cost to them. Now all three sons have come home

An American musical and a British drama view the imperative to strive as "a guilt-infected burden imposed by parents on children."

into the formidable Horatio, Sr., come not to console but to reproach his erring son.

Charles Haid has staged Mr. Whyte's phantasmagoric pageant with vividness and precision; the settings by Karl Eigsti (large, startling set-pieces) and the costumes by a man who bills himself as "Shadow" are tellingly extravagant and fantastic. Richard Bauer plays Horatio, Jr. brilliantly, with a febrile quaver that serves equally well for comic innocence and deep disintegration; the most poignant moments in the show are provided by Mr. Bauer, passionately unraveling before our eyes.

But there is something seriously the matter with "Horatio." It is still inchoate; its proportions and connections are not right. Mel Marvin's songs, in various 19th-century idioms, are agreeable and appropriate, but there is only just enough music to make us want more. "Horatio" is almost a musical, but not quite, which is an awkward thing to be; it has hardly any extended, full-

able to articulate all those connections clearly. Still, it is something—something considerable—to be made to feel that the connections are there; at the very worst, "Horatio" is an exceptionally interesting failure.

As to the British repertory, little need be said about "Relatively Speaking," an aridly ingenious mistaken-identity farce that begins in utter fatuity, but ascends in time to the merely inane. I should add that all around me, people were chuckling with obvious delight. But nobody needs the Arena Stage to provide such delights; "Relatively Speaking" is more interesting as a contrast to "In Celebration" than it would be on its own, but essentially it belongs in a dinner theater.

(Still, what if I had enjoyed the play as much as the man sitting next to me, who was fairly writhing in his seat with glee? I would then probably have said that laughter is its own excuse for being, even at the Arena. So my real objection to "Relatively Speaking" is not that it is

to celebrate their parents' 40th anniversary; one is a bitter mocker, the second is a smooth sell-out, and the youngest cries in his sleep.

This is an early play of Mr. Storey's, more derivative and less assured than "Home" or "The Contractor" or "The Changing Room." Some of its themes have been familiar at least since the days of D. H. Lawrence. That eldest son, the angry working-class intellectual who won't shut up, is one of many literary descendants of Jimmy Porter in "Look Back in Anger," and the whole play owes a lot to American family plays like "Death of a Salesman" and "Long Day's Journey into Night," where sons shout at their fathers, out of a lifetime of injury and bitterness, in the small hours of the morning. The three sons argue about what has happened to them (and, inferentially, about the state of England); the argument is lively enough, and always intelligent, but it is a little too elliptical to be followed closely, and it sometimes seems to emanate from

Julius Novick is an associate professor of literature at S.U.N.Y. College at Purchase and the author of "Beyond Broadway: The Quest for Permanent Theaters."

Sunday, July 14, 1974

THE NEW YORK TIMES

the playwright rather than from the characters.

But it is possible to like "In Celebration," for all its weaknesses, better than Mr. Storey's later plays, simply because it is so much less austere. It does not deliberately steer clear of crisis, climax, revelation, as do the later plays; emotion—family emotion, the most accessible kind—flows freely in it. And the performance it receives at the Arena, though not brilliant, is never less than satisfactory. (Donald Ewer is the actor I remember best, because his dogged, shambling coal-miner-father contrasts so clearly with the spruce businessman he plays in "Relatively Speaking.")

What is most strange about "In Celebration," in its context at the Arena, is that the issues raised by this realistic British play, set in the present — social mobility, the work ethic—are the same issues that are raised, in a completely different fashion, by "Horatio," a phantasmagoric American play set in the 19th century. In both plays, the imperative to strive is seen as a painful and guilt-infected burden imposed by parents on children. The burden is constant, and so is the pain; the ways in which it is imposed, and the ways in which it deforms its bearers, are manifold. The two plays reinforce each other, reverberate inside each other, come together in the mind, forming an experience that only such a theater as the Arena Stage can provide.

"Horatio," a new musical about Horatio Alger, shows that the famous adventure books "came out of a miserable, neurotic drunkard."

At right, David Murphy, as Horatio, is examined by phrenologist Max Wright.



The Washington Post

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

MONDAY, APRIL 22, 1974

'Raisin,' 'River Niger' Win Top Tonys

By Inman Mays

"Raisin," originally produced at Washington's Arena Theater, was chosen as the best musical of the year last night at the 28th annual Tony Awards presentation in New York.

"The River Niger" won the Tony for the best dramatic play of the 1973-1974 season and was selected over "Ulysses in Nighttown," "The Au Pair Man" and "Boom Boom Room."

Virginia Capers won the award for the best actress in a musical play for "Raisin."

Christopher Plummer was named best actor in a musical for "Cyrano" and in accepting the award said, "My singing voice sound like a cross between Lionel Stander and a crocodile in heat."

Colleen Dewhurst received the award for the best actress in a dramatic play for "A Moon for the Misbegotten."

Michael Moriarty was named best actor in a play for his role in "Find Your Way Home."

"The Moon for the Misbegotten," the O'Neill revival, also won a Tony for Jose Quintero as the best director of a dramatic play.

The award for the best director of a musical went to Harold Prince for "Candide," the revival which won a total of five Tony awards, including one for the best book of a musical.

"Gigi" won a Tony for the best score of a musical play.

Janie Sell was chosen best supporting actress in a musical for "Over Here" and Tommy Tune, appearing in white tails at the all black tie affair, received the award for the best supporting actor in a musical for his role in "Seesaw."

The Tony award for best supporting actress in a play went to Frances Sternhagen, for "The Good Doctor" and Ed Flanders was named best supporting actor in a play for "A Moon for the Misbegotten." His award was pre-



Associated Press

Ernestine Jackson, Deborah Allen and Virginia Capers, stars of "Raisin," winner of the Tony Award for best musical.

Theater

sented by Cloris Leachmann.

Awards for the best scenic design went to Franne and Eugene Lee for "Candide." Franne Lee also won an award as the best costume designer for "Candide." Michael Benett won the choreography award for "Seesaw" and the award for the best lighting design went to Jules Fisher for "Ulysses in Nighttown."

Tony Awards nominees are picked by a committee of seven critics and other theater notables. However, more than 430 persons active in the theater participate in the final balloting.

The League of New York Theaters and Producers gave several honorary special awards to:

Eugene O'Neill's "A Moon For The Misbegotten," for "an outstanding dramatic revival of a major American play."

The revival of "Candide" for "an outstanding contribution to the artistic development of the musical theater."

Peter Cook and Dudley Moore, who co-authored and star in "Good Evening" for "a unique contribution to the theater of comedy."

Bette Midler and Liza Minnelli for "superior concert entertainment on the Broadway stage."

Actors' Equity Association "for 60 years of forceful and tireless effort on behalf of American actors and actresses."

The Theater Development Fund for its "imaginative and energetic array of programs designed to nurture and enlarge the audience for the living theater."

John Wharton for "over 50 years of sagacious legal counsel to the entire theatrical industry."

Harold Friedlander "for more than 40 years of expert counsel in the design and preparation of display material for the theater."

The Tony awards are dedicated to the memory of director Antoinette Perry, first president of the American Theater Wing, which established them. Each year the League of New York Theaters and Producers puts on the show for the Wing.

Television viewers and a glittering audience at the Shubert saw musical numbers from three current Broadway shows, all performed by the stars in each — "Over Here!" with the Andrews sisters, "Lorolei" with Carole Channing, and "Raisin," with Virginia Capers and Ralph Carter. There was also a scene from "Seesaw," with Michele Lee. "Seesaw" has closed but was still nominated for best musical.

Other performers during the evening were Bea Arthur, Alice Faye, John Payne, Will Geer, Joel Grey, Harvey Lembeck, Cleavon Little, Charles Nelson Reilly and Nancy Walker.

EQUITY NEWS - 2
Actors' Equity Association
226 West 41st Street
N.Y.C. 10018 M

APR '74

Arena Stage Gets Rave From Soviet Magazine

The visit of Washington's Arena Stage to Russia late last year got a rave review in the recent issue of "Culture and Life," the official Soviet English-language publication.

In what must be considered the highest accolade possible, the author, A. Ivanov, said, "the actors' skill of transformation makes Arena Stage very much akin to the Moscow Art Theatre."

Arena presented "Our Town" and "Inherit the Wind" during the tour. Ivanov had some trouble describing "Our Town" but none at all applying ideology to "Inherit the Wind." Of the first play he said that "it is hard to retell because its contents lie in the undercurrent, between the lines," but of the second he said it

was about the "notorious 'monkey trial' to which American reactionaries brought an advocate of Darwin's teaching in 1925 . . . humaneness fights obscurantism in the open, armed with scientific erudition."

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 1973

The Washington Post

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

The Wide World of Arena Stage

MANY longtime residents will remember when a modest theater-in-the-round group called Arena Stage began regular performances at the Old Hippodrome Theater downtown. "The setting was seedy," recalls Rep. Orval Hansen (R-Idaho), who saw his first Arena play there about 23 years ago, "but the acting was first rate." It took a lot of time and effort before the setting caught up: the company's second home was the "Old Vat," formerly a local brewery and eventually a victim of the freeway near the Kennedy Center. Then in 1961, Arena Stage moved into its own home at 6th and M Streets SW., where the company has since added the Kreeger Theater. Throughout these years, the group has won local and national acclaim for its performances, but this month, Arena Stage scored three of its most smashing triumphs ever—in Moscow, Leningrad and New York City.

Arena's Soviet tour followed a two-year series of exchanges between the State Department's Office of Cultural Presentations and the U.S.S.R.'s Ministry of Culture. Not only were the company's performances of "Inherit the Wind" and "Our Town" the first presentations of serious American drama under the cultural agreement, but they were hits.

The Washington Post's Moscow correspondent, Robert G. Kaiser reported that "members of Moscow's small American community, who have seen other cultural extravaganzas come and go in the past, generally agreed that Arena had succeeded in conducting genuine cultural relations—a rare achievement. The en-

thusiasm of Moscow's theater world for the visit was ample proof of Arena's impact."

According to State Department officials, the troupe's visit received play in the Soviet press that was "unprecedented in its scope and warmth." This is especially noteworthy in the case of "Inherit the Wind," which focuses on freedom of speech—a freedom that dissident Soviet intellectuals are without. But the Arena company's personal relations with Soviet actors were unusually warm, and Soviet cultural officials were friendly and cooperative throughout the tour.

The success of Arena's mission to Moscow and Leningrad—a great credit to producing director Zeida Fichandler and the talented players she assembled for the tour—now has been complemented in New York, where an Arena Stage troupe has received rave reviews for "Raisin" at the 46th Street Theater.

That's quite a month for Arena Stage, and there's more: Last week, the triumphant company of "Inherit" returned to Washington to share its production with the fans at home—the people who have helped Arena grow in prestige for more than 23 years. Although these most recent successes of Arena Stage are great, indeed, the need for local financial support remains—since box office receipts account for only about two-thirds of Arena's expenses. This year, to celebrate the company's return home and to kick off the community fund drive for the season, a special benefit performance will be given Saturday. We're pleased to join in welcoming back Arena Stage, and wish the company yet another success, this time in its quest for ongoing support from the people of Greater Washington.

THE NEW YORK TIMES, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 28, 1973

The New York Times

Capital's Arena Stage to Tour Soviet

By BERNARD GWERTZMAN

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 27—The United States will send Washington's Arena Stage Company to the Soviet Union this fall with the first American dramatic presentations in the 15-year history of the Soviet-American cultural-exchange program.

Nixon Administration officials said that the State Department was expected to make the formal announcement tomorrow about the tour by the capital's leading professional theater group.

The officials, however, to maintain a touch of suspense, refused to disclose the names of the two plays the Arena group would produce, except to say that both were by American authors and that one would be added to Arena's repertory later this year.

In 1955, three years before

the first cultural-exchange agreement was signed, a "Porgy and Bess" company traveled to the Soviet Union independently to present the Gershwin opera.

In 1960, a "My Fair Lady" company toured the Soviet Union under State Department auspices. A "Hello, Dolly" company, starring Mary Martin, was scheduled to visit the Soviet Union in 1965, but was canceled at the last moment by the Soviet authorities because of American bombing of North Vietnam.

The Arena Stage, as its name implies, performs plays in the round, and Arena officials said today that they anticipated some problems in finding suitable theaters in Moscow and Leningrad, cities the group is likely to visit.

Although Soviet dramatists in the nineteen-fifties experimented with all forms of theaters, since the Stalin days Soviet dramatic productions have been limited to proscenium arches.

Alan Schneider, an associate director of the Arena, who has had extensive experience as a director on Broadway, will visit the Soviet Union in May on another State Department program, and while there, will scout theaters for the fall tour, an Arena official said.

Zelda Fichandler, the producing director of the Arena, is

also due in Moscow for an international theatrical conference.

Administration officials said that the Soviet audiences would be able to use earphones to hear simultaneous Russian translations of the two plays.

Although this will be the first American dramatic group to visit the Soviet Union, the prestigious Moscow Art Theater, founded by Stanislavsky, has put on Russian classics in New York under the cultural exchange.

The Arena Stage was founded in 1950, made its first home in a movie house and then moved to a dismantled brewery before settling in a modernistic brick-and-concrete home in Southwest Washington in 1961. In addition to the main Arena Stage, Mrs. Fichandler and her husband, Thomas, opened a neighboring experimental theater, the Kreeger, in 1971.

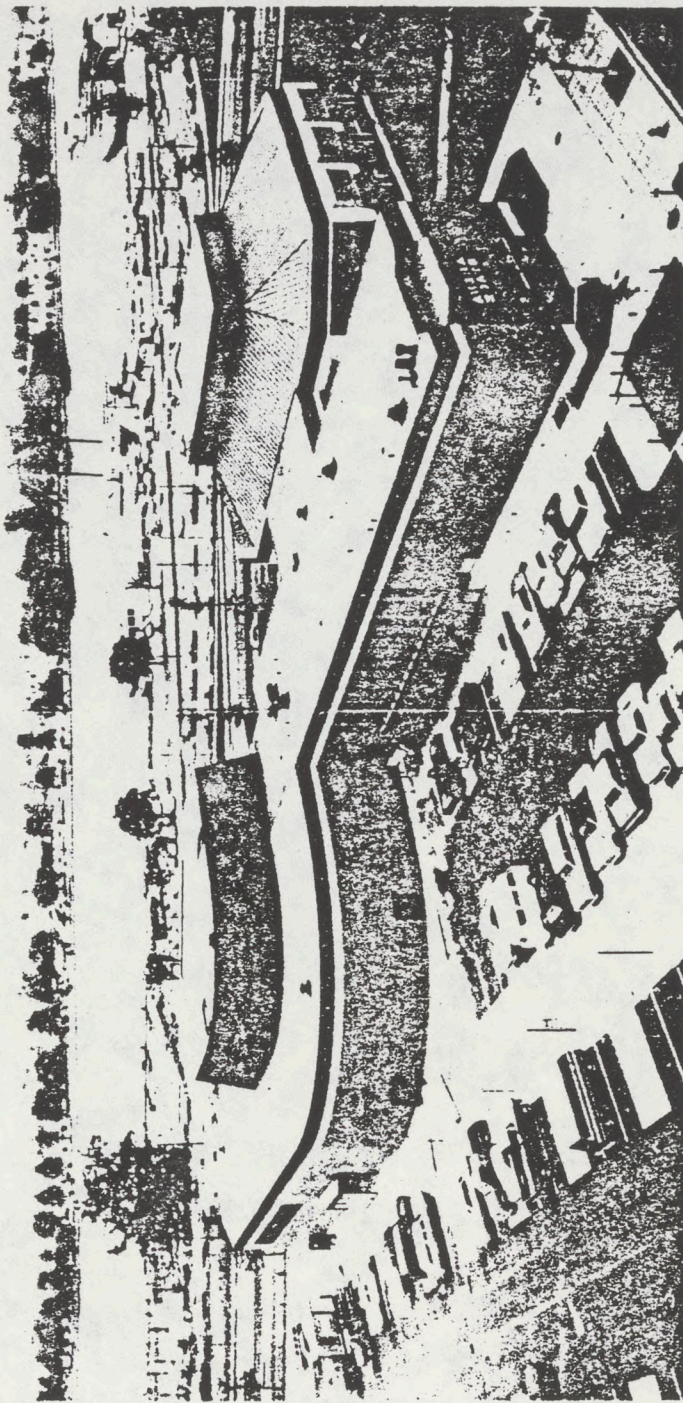
Arena has earned a national reputation through its productions of Howard Sackler's "The Great White Hope," Arthur Kopit's "Indians" and Michael Weller's "Moonchildren," which opened here and went on to Broadway.

umbrella

March 1972

Edinburgh, Scotland

PIONEER ALONG THE POTOMAC



THEATRE COMPANIES THE WORLD OVER have long taken notice of the activity alongside the Potomac River at 6th and M Streets in Washington, D.C. Here the Arena Stage has pioneered new ideas in theatre since 1961. Now, Producing Director Zelda Fichandler has announced the opening of added facilities to dramatically broaden the entire

range of the Theatre's programme. Attached to the original Arena Stage (the darker-roofed structure at left) is the exciting new facility which includes a new 500-seat theatre, a rehearsal stage, administrative offices, shop and storage areas, and space for a 200-seat restaurant. (Photo: Norman McGrath, courtesy *Progressive Architecture*.)

The Washington Post

LEISURE

Theater Notes

Margo Jones Award

By Richard L. Coe

This year's Margo Jones Award will go to Zelda Fichandler for Arena Stage's work in introducing new plays.

Created in 1961, this national award is given to the professional producer and theater which, in the opinion of a panel of judges, "has made the most significant contribution to the dramatic art" through the production of new plays. In the past two seasons, half of Arena's 16 productions have been of new works.

The salute comes at a time when Arena Stage Associates are in the midst of a fund drive to match possible foundation grants and at a period when the lack of new plays is one of the theater world's most glaring characteristics.

There also is personal drama in this tribute to Mrs. Fichandler.

Founder of the Dallas theater which bears her name, Margo Jones created the first in her generation's parade of resident professional theaters. Before she and Edward Mangum founded Arena Stage in 1950, the then very young Zelda sought out the older Margo.

"She took the time," Mrs. Fichandler recalls, "to talk to a frightened young girl to encourage her objectives and stiffen her right arm." It is indeed fitting that having stuck to the Jones ideals, Mrs. Fichandler is winning the Jones award.

The award was instituted shortly after her death by playwrights whose work Margo Jones introduced, Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee ("Inherit the Wind"); Tennessee Williams ("Summer and Smoke") and William Inge ("Picnic"). The annual judges panel consists of those playwrights, and J. B. Tad Adoue III, Miss Jones' former general manager; Arthur Ballet, of the University of Minnesota; and four critics: Clive Barnes of The New York Times; Henry Hewes of the Saturday Review; Sandra Schmidt of the Los Angeles Times; and this writer.

In the 10 previous awards, New York organizations have been represented three times, the New York Shakespeare Festival Public Theater, the American Place Theater and the Barr-Albee-Wilder Theater '64. Four years ago the Washington Theater Club was a winner. Now Washington, befitting its rank as the country's second major theater city, has won twice.

March 9, 1972

Theater as National Medium

BY DAN SULLIVAN

● Broadway's special Tony Award to Washington's Arena Stage next Sunday night is something to take pride in, but not something to be misinterpreted. It's not like Queen Elizabeth dubbing some humble greengrocer Sir This or That. It's not a sign that regional theater has made it (that happened some years ago). It's more like a salute a ship might give a sister ship.

The happy fact is that we now have two American theaters, equally professional. There is the one centered around Times Square. And there is the one strung around the country on long-distance cable, with franchises from Hartford to San Diego. But "franchises" sounds like McDonald's. In fact, resident theaters like Arena Stage and our own Mark Taper Forum are not producing their plays in conformity with some standard recipe drawn up back at corporate headquarters. They are creating their own work with an eye to what their particular audience wants and needs (not always the same thing).

The first beneficiary is the local audience. Where the choice once was "little theater" or tired road shows, there is now a place downtown where they can see plays produced with skill and freshness just for them. The performances won't always equal the best on Broadway but they'll generally compare to the average level of work there, and will generally surpass that encountered in bus-and-truck companies. The auditorium will be clean and comfortable, the show's design crisper as a rule than what you find in all but the glossiest commercial theater.

The play will sometimes be a little nothing. More often it will have some substance and distinction to it: either a classic or a new play, shrill but alive. (Regional theater produces a lot of new plays now: it doesn't have to have been a hit in New York to make it in Minneapolis, not if

it says something to Minneapolis.) In any case it will be a production newly crafted for this occasion, not a duplicate of something everybody else is seeing.

At the same time it will be connected to the pattern made by the other plays the theater is offering this season—in the eyes of those running the theater anyway. And they will still be in town next week if you want to ask them about it. Tom Fichandler of Arena Stage was once asked the difference between his theater and the National, a big touring house. "That's a hotel for plays," he said. "This is a home for them."

Resident theater becomes a normal part of the community's life, not an occasional high-society freak show. For young people it becomes something you grow up knowing about. (Not true of most of us who grew up outside New York in the 1940s: For us, plays were live movies, but duller.) It is an appetite that grows with knowledge, and that's why Broadway has no reason to fear the resident theater movement and in fact ought to be grateful to it. It's creating customers.

It's also providing work for theater professionals: More actors are acting outside New York than inside it these days, as a look at Equity statistics will tell you. Finally, it's providing what Broadway and Hollywood need most of all: "product." Not just plays like "The Great White Hope," but actors like George Grizzard of *The Adams Chronicles* and Sada Thompson of *The Family*, both of whom got their basic craft in regional theater and keep going back to refresh it.

So the thank-yous ought to go both ways next Sunday night. The resident theaters thanking Broadway for a gracious public salute and Broadway thanking the resident theaters for helping to keep the theater a national medium just when it seemed the road had died. Equals embracing equals, and about time, too.

The Washington Post

MONDAY, OCTOBER 18, 1971

Around Town

Arena Stage

The arts, alas, are rarely self-sustaining. When they seek success in more than commercial terms—when they experiment, innovate and set themselves high esthetic standards—they need sustenance, or subsidization from those who appreciate that sort of success and can afford to contribute toward giving others a chance to enjoy it. One such artistic enterprise in the Washington metropolitan area is Arena Stage, now, for the first time, appealing to the community at large for help. It has all the more need for that help in view of the degree to which the interest and enthusiasm of Washingtonians are focused today on the Kennedy Center.

Arena Stage was born 21 years ago, the offspring of a lofty conception in the minds of Zelda and Tom Fichandler. It won audiences by offering them theater fare of the highest and most imaginative quality; it won imitation in a score of other cities by its trials and successes here in Washington. It won generous support from the Ford Foundation to help it grow to maturity. But the Ford Foundation, reasonably enough, has made it clear that it expects the Washington community to pick up a major share of the burden of supporting Arena Stage after June of 1972.

So, the trustees of the theater, in addition to contributing to it generously themselves, are turning to the community for the first time in a drive to raise \$100,000. There is no lack of support for Arena Stage at the box office. It has an attendance average of about 90 per cent of capacity. But the quality of its productions leads to a deficit of about \$1,000 a performance. Arena Stage makes a rich contribution to the life of the Capital community. Those in the community able to do so can share in that contribution by contributing to Arena Stage.

Arena State Prominence Still Growing

THE SAN JUAN STAR — Thursday, June 24, 1971.

EDITOR'S NOTE— The great theatrical hope in Washington is the Arena Stage. Perhaps the most prominent regional theater in the nation, it continues to operate at a deficit, but remains innovative and consistently daring.

By DONALD SANDERS

WASHINGTON (AP) — When "The Great White Hope" opened to Broadway fanfare and acclaim on Oct. 3, 1968, there were amused and satisfied smiles at Washington's Arena Stage.

For the hit play, which went on to transformation into an equally successful film, was developed at Arena and had its premiere there Dec. 7, 1967.

Between May and October of the following year, "Indians" also made the shift from Arena to Broadway.

While this is gratifying to one of the nation's best known regional theaters, those involved in Arena's management insist it is an incidental prestige bonus. They say their commitment is to the capital, and that they would be just as happy to see a new play go on to another regional theater.

This fundamental commitment led Arena several months ago to steam ahead with "Pueblo," a semi-documentary about the captured U.S. intelligence ship, despite dark hints of legal action on the ground that it invaded the privacy of the Pueblo's skipper, Cmdr. Lloyd M. Bucher.

There was a happy resolution to that minor crisis: Bucher saw the first public performance and was so pleased that he joined the cast over drinks afterward.

The crisis that won't be solved so convivially—not unique to Arena—is financial.

Zelda Fichandler, the founder and producing director, and her husband Thomas, executive director, say they are engaged in

a constant struggle against a fiscal deficit.

Fichandler, who also is president of the League of Resident Theaters, says that "while business is good, we are all losing money."

At Arena, he told an interviewer, "We are normally filled to 90 per cent of capacity, but that's not enough to break even while we maintain a reasonable price scale, which is our responsibility. We put on expensive and difficult plays, and Zelda is unwilling to cut back and won't cut back after 20 years."

Arena has no permanent acting troupe, but there is an irreducible payroll of about 80 persons ranging from set, costume and lighting designers to ticket

sellers and parking lot attendants.

While half the 811 seats in the Arena are regularly sold on a subscription basis, the theater runs an annual deficit of \$300,000 to \$350,000, said Fichandler. The money must be made up from other sources in a city where there is no major industry and only a few moneyed foundations.

"It's an impossible town to raise money in," Fichandler said. "There are so many demands and theater is always down the list. People think of the symphony, the dance companies and so on. And they think of the theater as a place where you make a killing, but not many plays do, and even in New York it's the musical theater

that makes money.

"And people see these buildings we have here and think we have lots of money."

The buildings weren't always as impressive as the \$3-million complex Arena now occupies in Washington's Southwest redevelopment area near the Potomac.

It was in the winter of 1948 that Mrs. Fichandler, a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Cornell, and 40 others, including a policeman, a lawyer, a tennis pro and a jeweler, raised \$15,000 in 10 days to exercise an option on an old movie house in downtown Washington. There Arena opened the 1950-51 season with "She Stoops to Conquer" and "Of Mice and Men."

The Washington Post

Sunday, June 28, 1970



By Steve Seabo—The Washington Post

Louise Robinson lifts an imaginary weight during a Living Stage performance at Runaway House.

The Theater of 'Involvement'

By Alan M. Kriegsman

The immense strength of the Living Stage company is the way in which it manages to live up to its name.

The itinerant, interracial troupe of five professional actors, working under the umbrella of Arena Stage's educational program, recently completed its second year of performances. Led with fiery dynamism by director Robert Alexander, they have brought their special brand of improvisational theater to schools, churches, playgrounds, hospitals, recreation centers, libraries and even prisons, throughout Washington's inner city and surrounding suburban areas.

Their aim is to make theater into an intensely personal, electrifying experience for people whose past contact with the art has been remote and stultifying. They succeed to a remarkable degree. Audiences become so involved—mentally, physically and emotionally—with Living Stage performances that lives have been changed as a result. Responses are immediate, spontaneous and deep-seated. No one leaves untouched in some way.

The secret is involvement, involvement at basic, personal levels. The idea for Living Stage grew out of Robert Alexander's long quest for a kind of theater that would reach children, that would engage their interest and feeling to an extent that conventional theater seldom achieves.

After years of writing and directing children's theater along more traditional lines, Alexander came to the conclusion that "temporarily, at least, we have to get rid of the middleman—the playwright."

"The only way to really grab kids," Alexander says, "is to go to the source, to use material that comes directly from them, from their own experiences, dreams, hang-ups. This kind of theater can't help but be 'relevant'; the relevance is built in, the whole premise. And kids can't help but relate to it. They are it; they create it and they do it."

Alexander believes that most conventional, formalized theater—no matter how "relevant" in subject matter, no matter how expertly produced—has no hope of getting to today's younger gen-

"We're out to release each person's creativity, to unlock it and let it grow. It's amazing how readily it emerges..."

eration, as matters presently stand. All the artifices of theater, from the stage platform and curtain, to costumes and the cultivated speech of actors, serve to separate the play from the audience, to keep the spectator at a distance, to prevent his responses from overstepping the bounds of decorum or rationality.

By contrast, Living Stage brings itself into palpable contact with its audience. There are no costumes, make-up or props except for a rag-bag of remnants—a cap or two, an arm band, a flag, etc. Nor is there, physically speaking, a stage. Living Stage prefers to play in intimate, familiar, available spaces—living spaces. And it does not play to an audience, it plays, quite literally, with them.

"Every human being," Alexander asserts, "has creative impulses and ideas. Only everything about society, schools and our upbringing conspires to knock it out of us, to beat it down. We're out to release each person's creativity, to unlock it and let it grow. It's amazing how readily it emerges, if you just give it a little encouragement."

From such concepts, and years of practical experiments with young people, Alexander has fashioned an approach that combines elements of guerrilla theater, encounter groups, psychodrama, improvisation, mime and multi-media, all fused into the unique mix that is Living Stage.

Though Living Stage performances are entertaining—the audience has "fun"—they are anything but escapist. The improvisations always deal with the most charged topics, of concern to the whole group. As it happens, whether they are playing to well-to-do kids in suburbia or to underfed youth in some derelict neighborhood, the same subjects recur again and again—drugs, sex, the generation gap, the war, racism. And the language used is the language of the kids, of the

streets. All this candor sometimes gets the troupe into hot water with school officials or parents, but it gives Living Stage a rapport with their spectators few performers ever enjoy.

How Living Stage operates, and the galvanic effect it generates, was demonstrated with particular force in the season's closing performance a few weeks ago at Lorton Reformatory.

The audience at Lorton, some 50 prisoners, was composed of the members of the inmates' own theater group, called Inner Voices. Inner Voices is a story in itself. It was begun a couple of years ago when Ken Kitch, formerly of Arena, now directing "The Cage" for the Barbwire Theatre in New York, started holding drama workshops at Lorton. It was Kitch who sparked the formation of the Barbwire troupe at San Quentin prison five years ago, while he was working with the San Francisco Actors Workshop. At Lorton, he got the prisoners so fired up that they began doing workshops themselves, which then grew into Inner Voices. Under their soft-spoken, intensely charismatic director, Rhozier ("Roach") Brown, the Inner Voices troupe has concocted several plays and given performances both in and out of Lorton.

The Living Stage performance at Lorton began, as it does everywhere, imperceptibly. The actors strolled in and while a few casually began to set up chairs and props, others started to strum a guitar and sing some peppy rock tune. Before long, most of the prisoners had joined the actors in a free-for-all dance session, and without any formal beginning, things were under way.

Then came body exercises, led by one of the actors, a kind of psychosomatic shake-down in which limbs, voices and imaginations were loosened and primed. This led to "statues." A prisoner was asked to assume a pose expressing some idea or feeling; others were encouraged

to come up and relate their own bodies to his, to form a living statue. The resulting configuration looked very much like Rodin's "The Burghers of Calais," and it radiated a kind of impassioned raptness. The remaining spectators were asked to name it, to say what they thought it signified. "Failure," "Agony," "Togetherness," were some of the responses.

Next came "making a machine." In this exercise, the prisoners each devised some vigorous, repetitive movement as they took places in what they dubbed their "Liberation Machine." Together they shook and vibrated in a wildly intricate human assembly line, gradually adding grunts, clicks and other sounds.

Spurred on by one of the actors, the Liberation Machine accelerated its pace and pressed its energies to the breaking point, everyone collapsing in a heap. Others were prompted to come up and "repair" the damage, with imaginary wrenches and oil cans. In a short while, the machine was chugging away more furiously than ever, even bigger and more complicated in design than before.

All of these activities, and others, were part of the warm-up phase Living Stage uses to break down inhibitions and to work up a head of dramatic steam. Then came improvised skits, on themes suggested by the prisoners, and with the prisoners gradually drawn into the role-playing. Between scenes there was more rock, and more dancing, often-times taking off directly from the skits.

One skit was presented entirely by the Inner Voices crew, the motif being "America, the Beautiful." "America the Beautiful is America the Dreadful," some of the dialogue ran. "The mountains and the plains? What about the slums, the garbage, the hate and fear?" The skit involved a cynical dope "pusher" and a couple of junkies, one of them de-

terminated to kick the stuff and set himself free. "That white powder is just another way the white man keeps us enslaved." The acting was astonishingly vivid and credible, and as the skit took shape, one could see mimicry and impersonation giving way to genuine personification and portrayal.

The final phase of each performance is a "rap" session, during which the Living Stage players chat about their own lives, problems and aspirations, and the audience talks about how the show affected them, what they liked and didn't like, how things might be improved.

The accomplishments of Living Stage are but a reflection of the skill, magnetism and versatility of the troupe's members. Aside from musical director Rick Barse, who provides continuity at the electric piano and on other instruments, all of them double in music and dance, in one way or another.

Louise Robinson, who has performed with the Howard University Players, is a gifted singer. Becky Rice was a member of several professional dance troupes before coming to Washington, where she has worked with the American Playground Theater. Theodore Wilson, formerly with the Negro Ensemble Company, has a featured part in the current film, "Cotton Comes to Harlem," directed by Ossie Davis. Philip Savath has been an actor, dancer, director and choreographer, and has appeared in a number of off-Broadway productions, including "The Beard."

The touring performances are only one part of the Living Stage enterprise, which also includes children's musical theater, improvisation workshops for three age groups (including adults) and teacher training programs, all at Arena.

Though Living Stage is an offshoot of Arena and uses the parent company's facilities, it does not share in its general budget. So far, Living Stage has been separately financed by private foundations, the D.C. Commission on the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Like so many other artistic endeavors, however, it is now in grave need of additional funds if its future is to be assured. It would be tragic if Living Stage were to have to curtail or suspend its activities, for it would be hard to think of a group whose services are more desperately needed — or more profoundly appreciated by its beneficiaries.

Indians Reported in Manhattan

A very gracious invitation crossed our desk the other day, urging us to attend a benefit performance in New York City of the Arthur Kopit play, "Indians," which opened here at the Arena Stage last May. Enclosed as part of the sales pitch was a review of the Arena performance by Clive Barnes in the New York Times, who apparently journeyed here by stagecoach for the occasion. We assume he came by stage from the tone of one passage in his review:

"When a regional theatre makes national news with a major premiere, it deserves national attention. Without this attention our regional theatres will always be regarded as second-class citizens, a kind of Off-off-off-Broadway wasteland . . ."

Well, that's one end of the telescope, you might say, and admittedly it is not easy, living in this sleepy southern town, to keep a proper perspective on what is and isn't national. Since the Arena Stage needs no defense from us, perhaps we should have raised the matter last spring if we were going to bring it up at all. But it is almost impossible, what with Congress in session and the President back in town, and one thing or another, to keep track of every single thing that is said out in the provinces.



The Theater: 'Indians' in Washington

New Version Presented
by Arena Stage

By CLIVE BARNES

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 26—

There will always be a particular fascination about seeing a work in progress. Last July I saw Arthur Kopit's play "Indians" at its world premiere in London, given by the Royal Shakespeare Company. Last evening I saw a new version at Washington's Arena Stage, and the play, with a completely different staging and a largely new cast, is due for Broadway next fall.

In the light of this I would not normally have come to Washington if only for fear of seeing something in an unfinished state. But Mr. Kopit, I was told, raised no objection, and one or two other New York critics had written about it, so I came to see it. I am glad I did, and this partly because of the Arena Stage itself.

When a regional theater makes national news with a major premiere, it deserves national attention. Without this attention our regional theaters will always be regarded as second-class citizens, a kind of Off-off-off-Broadway wasteland. But the play itself has been reshaped and rewritten—almost unrecognizably from the London version—and is markedly better.

Mr. Kopit's play charges that the United States Government toward the end of the last century was guilty of genocide—that in effect, whether by definite design or casual error, it wiped out most of the Indian people, denying them both land and food. The destruction of the buffalo, to provide food for the railway workers pushing westward, removed the Indians' food and shelter. Eventually, sometimes by deception, sometimes by force, the Government cheated on Thomas Jefferson's pledge: "It may be regarded as certain that not a foot of land will ever be taken from the Indians without their consent."



Stacy Keach

The Cast

INDIANS, a play by Arthur Kopit. Staged by Gene Frankel; settings by Kert Lundell; costumes by Marjorie Slaiman; lighting by William Eggleston; music by Richard Peaslee; choreography by Virginia Freeman; production manager, Hugh Lester; stage manager, Albert L. Gibson. Presented by Arena Stage, Thomas C. Fichandler, executive director; Zelda Fichandler, producing director. At Arena Stage, Washington.

Buffalo Bill Cody.....	Stacy Keach
Sitting Bull.....	Manu Tupou
John Grass.....	Barry Primus
Interpreter.....	Yusef Bulus
Scotted Tail.....	Howard Witt
Grand Duke Alexis.....	Raul Julia
Ned Buntline.....	Robert Prosky
Uncas.....	Raul Julia
Wild Bill Hickok.....	Barton Heyman
Chief Joseph.....	Richard Bauer
Jesse James.....	Ronny Cox
Oaethorpe.....	Jack Malarkey
Colonel Forsythe.....	Peter MacLean

Mr. Kopit makes those charges in a play of considerable originality. For the London staging, he based it all around Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. To an extent this framework is maintained, but now the author finds a second dramatic focus in the commission sent by the President in 1886 to investigate Indian grievances at the Standing Rock reservation. Interestingly, the play cuts between the show and the commission, emphasizing the contrast between the two.

There is still an odd strain of facetiousness in the play, although not nearly so much as before. In addition to that occasional stylistic unevenness, there remains the occasional irrelevancy, so that the play is not quite well-organized enough. But the more I think about it the more impressive an achievement it seems. I suppose that from the beginning Mr. Kopit had a startlingly good concept, which went slightly but disastrously awry.

Changes From London
All for the Best

Now it is coming round into excellent shape. It was also very sensible to try again in the creative but comparatively relaxed atmosphere of the Arena Stage, rather than trying to fix the Broadway production on the road. That is just the way the regional theater should be used.

In Buffalo Bill Mr. Kopit has found a genuine tragic hero—the first white liberal. Blundering, blustering, misguided and lost, Buffalo Bill is trying to do the right thing, yet infallibly doing the wrong, pathetically reduced at the end, yet still having the courage to face up to an impossible situation, where simple compassion was not enough. If you want to take it so, I think you may find "Indians" extraordinarily relevant to the black/white confrontation, but Mr. Kopit never draws a specific parallel. He just leaves you to make your own choices.

The Arena Stage is one of the liveliest companies in the country. But of the productions I have seen there including last season's "The Great White Hope"—nothing can match this "Indians." Admittedly the director, Gene Frankel, has virtually an entirely different play to work on, but the staging itself is a vast improvement over the London version. It uses the Arena Stage with such virtuosity that I wonder how this can be repeated in a proscenium theater on Broadway. This is destined to be a major problem, for from the opening to the close Mr. Kopit and

Mr. Frankel seek—usually successfully—to catch up the audience in a total experience. I do not believe I have ever seen more persuasive advocacy for theater in the round.

In many respects—no, in most respects—the acting is not as polished as that of the Royal Shakespeare, which after all is one of the two great English-speaking theater companies. But it has better material, a better director, and more identification with and understanding of the subject. London's Buffalo Bill, Barrie Ingham, produced a brilliantly detached performance, amusing, touching, elegant. But Stacy Keach is infinitely more convincing, partly because he is a better, very different kind of actor, but much more because the role is torn out of his own experience.

Mr. Keach, smiling too widely, with always the guilty break in his voice, reveals a man fooling himself yet still maintaining a kind of baffled, battered honesty. This, I think, is integral to Mr. Kopit's character, whereas the dazzling charlatan offered by Mr. Ingham, remarkable as it was, lacked the same relevance to the play.

The other great performance at the Arena is that of Manu Tupou as Sitting Bull, who has the strange beauty of comprehended pain, and a nobility all the more impressive for its humanity. The rest of the cast is very fine. Barry Primus is poignant and passionate as the half-Westernized John Grass. Richard Bauer has the right, stumbling dignity for Chief Joseph. Raul Julia does some most attractive stage conjuring tricks in a variety of roles. Peter MacLean impresses particularly as Colonel Forsythe, the officer in charge of the final Indian massacre, and Barton Heyman makes a boisterously effective Wild Bill Hickok.

There are still things that I think could be done with the play, and it also has to be adapted for the proscenium. But I think it will be one of the more interesting Broadway openings next season, and I hope the producers take along for the trip the excellent Washington designers, Kert Lundell and Marjorie Slaiman, as well as the composer, Richard Peaslee, and the choreographer, Virginia Freeman.



THE SUNDAY SUN

BALTIMORE, MD.

JULY 7, 1968

SECTION D

New Role For Negro Actors

Arena Stage Has Ford Grant To Let Them Take White Parts

Left, James Earl Jones as the champion appears with German soldiers, Richard McKenzie and Gil Rodgers in Howard Sackler's "The Great White

Hopewell." Below, Jones plays Zachariah and Robert Foxworth, Morris in "The Blood Knot," directed by Gladys Vaughan at Arena Stage last year.



By R. H. GARDNER

Washington's Arena Stage will be the first theater in the country—and, perhaps, the world—to make racial differences the basis for a new rationale of production.

Heretofore, the artistic justification for casting Negroes in parts not originally intended for them has been the very irrelevance of the actor's color, i.e., the character in question might just as well be black as white.

But, starting next season, Arena Stage will abandon this generally followed "rule of irrelevance" and attempt to use the differences (internal as well as external) between black and white actors to enhance and deepen the values of the play.

A brief explanation of the new policy was included last week in a release announcing a \$250,000 Ford Foundation grant for enlarging the present Arena Stage company with a "significant number" of black actors.

The New Rationale

Zelda Fichandler, the theater's founder and producing director, was quoted as follows:

"For the first time in any American company, black actors will not simply be a part of the cast but part of the expression of alienation, of loneliness, of anger, frustration, yearning, need, etc. That is part of the very expression of the play. By means of pointed and creative casting, it is the intention to draw the world that is outside of the theater into the theater and to give heightened contemporary meanings to plays from the Greeks to the present day."

In "Toward a Deepening Esthetic," a 38-page essay distributed with the release, Mrs. Fichandler elaborates upon the new rationale—a direct outgrowth, it seems, of her conviction that the central reality in America today is the relationship between black and white people and that any theater that fails to recognize it

is in imminent danger of "esthetic death."

"The Negro's struggle for power—economic power, business power, political power, intellectual power, psychological power, human power—affects in the most root way his relationships to other Negroes, to white men, and to himself and the relationships of white men to him, to each other and to themselves."

Yet, she observes, this "single most pervading social phenomenon of our age, with isolated exceptions, is so absent from our stage one would think it did not exist."

In trying to correct the situation, Mrs. Fichandler makes it clear that "the motivation is not to employ Negro actors for their own good or out of impulses of white guilt or social generosity or responsibility. . . . Nor do we have in mind enticing the middle-class Negro dollar into the box office till. . . . Surely the social environment is a character in all significant plays, and the examination of human values is at the very core of the dramatic experience. . . . Surely the Negro actor, living at this moment of history, knowing exclusion from the dominant white culture and therefore having a special view of it, coming now into power, becoming now what he can be—surely he has the capacity for a highly unique and particular expressiveness on the stage."

Stage "Explosion"

It is this unique quality of the Negro that Mrs. Fichandler hopes to utilize through "creative casting" in plays of a size and scope large enough to accommodate it.

"They are bound to be plays of major repercussion. If classics, they will embody themes and confrontations whose modern implications are inescapable. . . . If contemporary, they will deal with conditions of psychology and circumstance that illuminate the human condition at large, rather than special sectors of it. . . . Plays that constitute, by their form and theme, 'models' of the reality around us are admirably suited. . . .

"The creative casting of Negro and white actors in a repertory selected with that end in mind," Mrs. Fichandler continues, "should make it possible for us to explode the theater event to a dimension that we have rarely experienced (and) connect the work on stage with the reality outside. New images should pop out at us, made from combinations only now explored: new understandings jump to mind; new connections suddenly occur. . . . A motivation deepens or contradicts itself or shifts its ground. A conflict becomes more ambiguous, or less so. . . . Tensions already in the play are excited and erupt with yet another force. Meanings from the past are sent zooming straight into our own lives. We are given new eyes with which to see old plays and old plays find fresh facets to touch the present day. Perspective deepens, widens, curves back upon itself. The stage holds all the world."

No "Forced" Casting

It is indeed a fascinating idea and—to the extent that it may provide encouragement and jobs for black actors, as well as a stronger incentive for black people generally to attend the theater—a most admirable one. But Mrs. Fichandler insists the primary purpose of her plan is to achieve a deeper "esthetic," and I shall take her at her word and comment upon it accordingly.

There can be no doubt that the Negro has a vitality our theater sorely needs. He has already demonstrated this in many ways. But the problem of casting black actors in roles the playwright intended for white ones it seems to me lies not in the Negro's ability either to act or to endow such roles with a new and unique quality; it lies in the effect of such casting on the audience's proper understanding and appreciation of the play.

Mrs. Fichandler disclaims any intention of warping the theme of a play by forced interracial casting—and observes that, if Arthur Miller had intended *Biff* to be a Negro in "Death of a Salesman," he would have stated something to that

effect in the stage directions. But, in her "informal notes," concerning the casting of several productions for the coming Arena season, she appears to contradict herself. Especially is this true of her remarks regarding Luigi Pirandello's "Six Characters in Search of an Author."

For those unfamiliar with this intriguing work, I shall explain that the setting is a theater. A company of actors (Leading Man, Leading Lady, etc.) are rehearsing a play when six characters from another play (unfinished) enter and demand to be heard.

They constitute a strangely divided family, made up of a *Father*, *Mother* and assorted children. The *Mother*, who left the *Father* some twenty years before, has a 22-year-old son by him and three additional offspring by another man. The latter consist of a grown daughter (referred to as the *Stepdaughter*), a teen-age son and a 4-year-old girl.

Circumstances have forced the *Stepdaughter* to become a prostitute, working in the back room of a dress shop operated by a disreputable woman named *Madame Pace*. And it is there one afternoon that the *Father*, unaware of her identity, and she have a most unfortunate encounter.

How It Could Be Cast

The members of the acting company listen to this sordid tale, at first with irritation, then with such growing interest that they forget all about the play they started out to do and decided to perform this one instead. Of course, their performances do not approach the reality represented by the characters themselves, standing there in amazement, watching.

Mrs. Fichandler speculates as to how this play, under the new system, might be handled:

"Cast the *Stepdaughter* with a Negro woman. She is a loner, outside the family, used by circumstances, her own nature, her family relationships. She is to be 'embodied,' portrayed by a member of the 'acting company' who is white, but it doesn't work; they can't

reach each other, understand each other's motives, needs. The *Father*, *Mother*, *Son* and the two kids should be white. Acting Company to be interracial cast. The 'Leading Man' should be a Negro. The *Father* tries to make him understand why he did what he did, that he was justified, but when the *Actor* acts out the scenes they seem off the point. The *Actor* has only his 'version' of the *Father* and the *Father* has only his own 'version' of himself."

I gather that Mrs. Fichandler is in this case using color in a symbolic sense. Negroes are alienated from society, therefore the casting of a black actress in the part of a "loner" makes her even more lonesome. Unfortunately, symbols can be interpreted in more than one way. A little farther on in the "notes" Mrs. Fichandler mentions that *Madame Pace*, too, might be played by a Negro—which makes one wonder what conclusions the black members of the audience might draw from the fact that the only socially opprobrious characters in the play—a prostitute and a madam—had been assigned to Negroes.

Moreover, there's no getting away from the fact that the *Stepdaughter*, whatever symbolic overtones the actress playing her manages to bring to the part, is first and foremost a human being. Even in a Pirandello play, where reality is always an elusive thing.

And how can you explain, even in a Pirandello play, the peculiarity that, though all the other members of her family are white, she isn't? As Mrs. Fichandler herself has said, if Tennessee Williams had intended *Tom Wingfield* in "The Glass Menagerie" to be black, he would have specified as much in the play. And he wouldn't have made *Tom*'s mother and sister white.

Matter Of Interpretation

Yet it isn't really a matter of whether Tennessee Williams or Arthur Miller wanted this or that, but rather whether one's well-meaning attempt to make the classics contemporary turns them into something entirely different.

One of Pirandello's basic concepts in the play concerns the impossibility of a person's ever being able to grasp what's going on in another person's mind. "Each one of us," says the *Father*, "has within him a whole world of things, each one of us his own special world. And how can we ever come to an understanding if I put in the words I utter the sense and value of things as I see them, while you who listen to me must inevitably translate them according to the conception of things each one of you has within himself. We think we understand each other, but we never really do."

Such is the problem of communication between man and man—a universal idea. But make one of the men white and the other black and, in the framework of our present society, you change what was meant to be a comment upon the human condition itself to a comment upon two particular kinds of men at a particular moment of history. And, as a result, the audience gets a distorted view of the play.

New Plays: The Answer

At one point in her essay, Mrs. Fichandler observes that Arena Stage never seemed more "alive" to her than during its presentation last season of "The Great White Hope" (based on the life of Negro heavyweight Jack Johnson) and "Blood Knot," a parable of interracial strife.

I agree.

For it is here—in plays dealing directly with that relationship Mrs. Fichandler (and I, too) feel to be central to our time—that the hope of a more vigorous theater lies.

It is, in other words, from new works, written specifically for integrated casts, in which black actors play black people and white actors white, that our theater can draw the vitality it needs to lift it from the decadence in which it now languishes. And an inter-racial company of the sort Mrs. Fichandler proposes to establish at Arena Stage can only serve to encourage and stimulate their creation.

Vigorous Theater Adds Luster To Capital Life

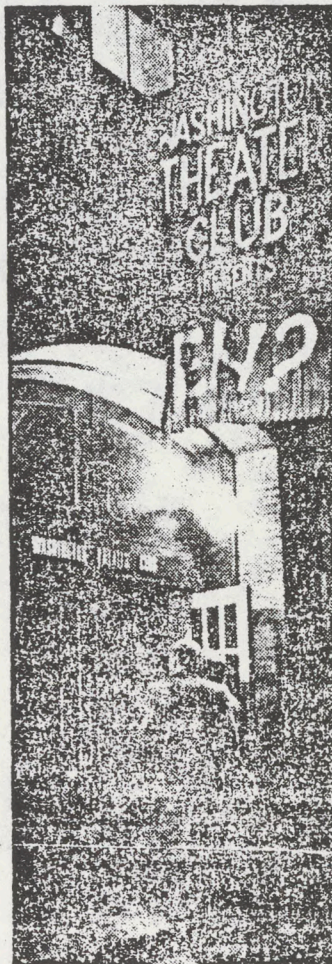
By DON RUBIN
Register Staff Reporter

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Several years ago, someone described this city to me as a "theatrical wasteland." If such was the case years ago, it is certainly not the case now. Washington now has three fully-professional resident companies at work with two more scheduled to begin operation in the next two years. And five serious companies vying with one another is a most exciting prospect for any theatergoer in any city.

The oldest of the groups is, of course, the well-known Arena Theater at Sixth and M Streets, S.W. Founded in 1950 by Zelda Fichandler and a band of young, talented and enthusiastic theater people, the group's first home was in an abandoned movie house. Seven years ago it moved into its third and present home—a magnificent glass-fronted edifice which is spacious and yet intimate, infinitely more comfortable than most theaters and marvelously equipped. Curiously, with all these things working against it, the Arena has managed to provide its audiences through the years with some outstanding and provocative theater.

One of the oldest theaters in the still-growing resident professional theater movement, the Arena has, through the years, suffered the same problems of all resident theaters—non-support, misunderstanding, criticism of its struggle to build a company, second-guessing in its choice of plays. Somehow, though, the Arena has survived—thanks mostly to the yeoman work of its founder and mainstay, Zelda Fichandler—and the theater today stands with the Guthrie in Minneapolis and the Alley in Houston near the top of the movement.

Everything about the Arena happily is done right—from its modern and attractive exterior design to its triple windowed box office, to its long, clean lobby to its lighting and backstage facilities. The theater itself is entered through a second carpeted hall and that short walk from lobby to theater is enough of ritual, provides enough of a change in feeling to



insure a kind of expectation in the house itself.

The seats are arranged in a sharp upward slope from the stage on all four sides—each section seating approximately 200. Small boxes ring the back of the house. Entrances and exits are made

through ramps leading from the stage directly to the dressing rooms—a distance long enough to permit unobtrusive activity. Even the lighting system at the Arena is impressive. Completely computerized, the system contains some 200 lights.

"Great White Hope"

It was the play, however, which impressed most. Entitled "The Great White Hope," and written by Howard Sackler, it is probably the most complex play ever to be staged by a resident company. Featuring an integrated cast of nearly 60 playing a total of some 200 roles, the play also calls for some 1,000 costume pieces. So complex was the costuming that each member of the company was given a set of cut out dolls showing the costumes needed for each scene.

The play itself—though somewhat simplistic and repetitious—is a fascinating one and is precisely the kind of play which could only be staged by a non-commercial producing group. It is also a play which does both Arena and the entire resident theater movement proud. Revolving about the life of Jack Johnson—the first Negro heavyweight champion of the world—the play details Johnson's rise from a brash young slugger to the title and then his human descent from hard-earned pride to a blood-filled shame. It is the story, too, of his love for a white woman, the impossibility of such love in our contemporary society, of a man's refusal to sell out—and then his sell out, of violence and prejudice, ignorance and faith.

Set on two continents and presented in 23 long scenes, the play is at once a sociological, a physical and a psychological odyssey with Johnson at the center. It is a play, too, which relates to today. It is a play full of today's rhythms and eternal problems, a play full of human suffering and pathos and the stubborn human will, a play which is as modern in its form as it is old in its theme.

Many points are made in Sackler's
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(over)

► WASHINGTON THEATER ACTIVITY VIGOROUS

(Continued from Page 1)

play. Perhaps its most cogently stated theme is that of pride—human, racial, national. "I'll be proud to be a colored man tomorrow," says a youth to Johnson just before his first title fight. Johnson's answer is sharp and pointed. "Man, if you aren't there now, all the boxing in the world ain't going to do nothing." But this is simply a small part of a very large canvas.

A Flawed Play

That the play is flawed must be noted—several scenes in its second and third acts present caricatures rather than characters, stereotypes (German bumbler, loud-mouthed rednecks) rather than multi-faceted creatures—but some cutting and rewriting can easily clear these problems. The important thing here is that such a play is being given a hearing.

"The Great White Hope" is clearly not a commercial venture and would probably never find a production in a commercial theater because of its immense size and scope. That Arena Stage is bold enough and skilled enough to mount this play is to its great credit.

One further note: Arena officials—before the show even opened—expected to lose somewhere about \$35,000 on "The Great White Hope."

There is much theatrical activity taking place today in Washington; admittedly, not all of it is great or even good. But the simple fact that so much activity is taking place is both impressive and encouraging. There's life in the theaters of the capital and where there's life, of course, there's always hope. Washington—at least theaterwise—is a most hopeful city.



Washington's opulent Arena Stage—one of the more impressive buildings in the resident professional theater movement.

ENVIABLE BUT NO LUXURY

Arena Stage, in Production of "The Devils," Makes Clear Importance of a Decentralized Theater

By HOWARD TAUBMAN

IT is tempting for a visitor watching the vividly fluid and imaginative production of a daring and provocative play like John Whiting's "The Devils" to think of the Arena Stage in Washington as an enviable luxury.

But one remembers the sweat and dedication that Zelda Fichandler and her loyal adherents have devoted to the rearing of this institution. One notices the vigilance and unremitting labors that go into keeping it alert and creative. One sees it functioning as a home for drama that does not despise the mind. And one realizes that a theater of this character is not a luxury but a necessity.

Nevertheless, Washington is to be envied for having it, and should be congratulated for its good sense in supporting it. Today the Arena Stage has its own modern plant, which was opened two years ago, and it has hopes of expansion to embrace a small theater for experimental purposes to supplement its main 750-seat theater.

But Mrs. Fichandler and her supporters have had to struggle. The Arena Stage's beginnings were modest. It did not arrive like the Minneapolis theater, a full-blown enterprise complete with gleaming new house and a major troupe headed by glamorous Tyrone Guthrie. The figures, "The Devils" has a Arena Stage has made itself scope that our cautious, dewhat it is today—that is, Mrs. Fichandler has.

The Arena Stage, with its rectangular playing space flanked on all four sides by steeply rising tiers of seats, reflects Mrs. Fichandler's philosophy of a theater in which players and public are not separated by vast distances or hermetic sets. It undertakes eight plays a season, each for four weeks, and does not hesitate to be challenging intellectually as well as enterprising.

Insurance

Thanks to its subscription set-up, it is not entirely at the mercy of every vagrant wind that blows. According to Thomas C. Fichandler, the producing director's husband and himself the energetic executive director, the Arena Stage has about 20,000 places to dispose of in a four-week run. Subscribers buy more than half of these seats in advance. By their vote of confidence in the management's judgment, they liberate it to take chances.

How else could a bold and unconventional work like "The

"Devils" get performed these and ironic memories. Although days? It came into being in England where the Royal Shakespeare Theater, another nonprofit organization, introduced it at the Aldwych, its London base of operations. It was considered for Broadway production, but then the idea was dropped.

No one can blame a producer who must brood over the risks of a commercial production. Dramas with intellectual pretensions still get done on Broadway, but their paths are enormously hazardous. They need the help of glittering stars, famous directors, production hoopla and, most important, instant triumph, or they sink without a trace.

Experimentation

At the Arena Stage, or in any theater with a firm subscription foundation, there is a margin for experiment and adventure. Whether one likes "The Devils" or not, it is unquestionably an unusual play, unorthodox in structure and daring in content. Based on Aldous Huxley's "The Devils of Loudun," which dealt with events that occurred in early 17th-century France, this play contemplates politics and faith, love and hate, damnation and salvation, bigotry and rationalism.

In its willingness to range over a wide landscape and to encompass many and diverse figures, "The Devils" has a scope that our cautious, dewhat it is today—that is, Mrs. Fichandler has.

In its baldness and violence this play by an English writer, who unhappily died last June at the age of 45, recalls to mind Webster and "The Duchess of Malfi."

But the viewpoint is distinctly contemporary. The main strand of the complex fabric follows the destruction of a priest by a false accusation of diabolism. He has provided his enemies with reason to hate him. A sybarite, he has violated his oath of celibacy and pursued other earthly pleasures. A brilliant preacher, he has irritated his fellow clergymen. A man of charm and intellect, he has achieved political influence and disturbed Richelieu.

The only flaw in the accusation that through his alliance with Satan he has forced visions of lust and filth on a prioress and her nuns is that he does not know and has not even seen his victims. But the king's commissioner and the fanatical priests demand a confession and names of accomplices.

In Washington this phase of "The Devils" recalls poignant

Whiting saved his most sardonic comment for the final page. After the condemned priest has been burned at the stake, the mob, which has been howling for blood, suddenly senses that the victim has achieved saintliness and it fights for the remains.

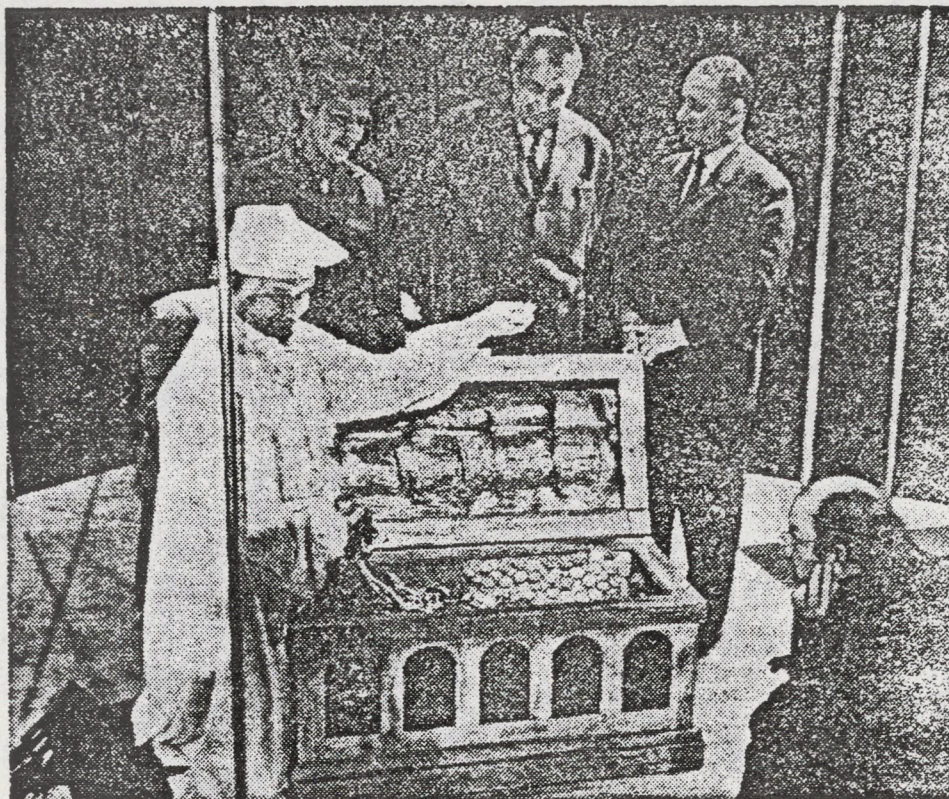
Jeanne, the hysterical prioress wanders through the streets, encounters the earthly, blunt Sewerman. She wants to know what the crowd is up to. "It's bits of the body they're after," he replies. She asks eagerly, "As relics?"

"Don't try to comfort yourself," he answers. "They want them as charms. There's a difference, you know." He holds up a charred bone he has snatched from a passerby. "They don't want to adore this. They want it to cure their constipation or their headache, to have it bring back their virility or their wife. They want it for love or hate." He holds out the bone. "Do you want it for anything?"

Mrs. Fichandler's handling of a large cast in this multiscened, episodic work is stunning in its flow and invention, and Hurd Hatfield is notable in the principal role. As sheer stagecraft, if nothing else, this production is worth investigation.

By chancing the American premiere of a play of this caliber the Arena Stage, however, does something more. It proves that decentralization of our theater need not be merely a slogan and a hope but can be a striking and stimulating reality.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 1968



Frida Lurie, Valentin Katayev and Victor Roznov, Soviet writers (standing, right) meet actors Robert Prosky as "Volpone" and Tom Toner as Corbaccio before a performance at the Arena Stage yesterday.—Star Staff Photo.

Russians Tour Theater, Joke With Arena Staff

By HARRIET GRIFFITHS
Star Staff Writer

Three Soviet writers in a genial mood toured the Arena Stage theater yesterday, laughed at the nondescript backstage dog and kidded popular conceptions of Russians and Americans.

Americans, said author Valentin Katayev through an interpreter, are much better in reality than they are portrayed in American literature.

"But we are also better," he added with a smile.

"Mr. Katayev expressed my own views," seconded Victor Rozov, a playwright.

Similarities Noted

The third member of the trio visiting the United States under the cultural exchange agreement, Frida Lurie, a literary critic, said the impression coming from American literature, Americans visiting the Soviet Union and Russians coming here was of "great similarities between the Russian people and American people."

Mme. Lurie reported that the Soviet people have available not only the general and well-known contemporary literature of America, but also recent plays that have been translated and printed

Right now, two Moscow theaters are producing "Two for the Seesaw," pointed out by Mr. Rozov.

Mr. Katayev, 65, is a novelist and playwright best known for his farce, "Squaring the Circle," and his socialist-realist novel, "Time, Forward!" Mr. Rozov 50 is best known in this country for his screenplay for the movie, "The Cranes Are Flying." Mme. Lurie is a critic specializing in American literature.

Watch "Volpone"

The writers inspected the theater before watching a performance of "Volpone." Mr. Rozov took copious notes, and Mr. Katayev said he had dreamed of a real arena theater in the ancient tradition.

Backstage, the visitors found

Cyril Fonsdale, a mournful looking dog adopted by the theater's scenic designer. The dog wandered in several weeks ago and was named after a character in the then current play, "Once in a Lifetime."

"What a nice dog you have made up for the performance—it looks as if it's really alive," jested Mr. Katayev. It reminded him of his own dog Mishka, whom he solemnly reported he had taught to write poetry and which he believed the intrigues of other dogs had kept from publication so far.

The Russians looked in on actors waiting for the matinee, and Mr. Katayev wanted to know what was their favorite leisure time game—dominoes? He was told chess was very popular, and was asked what Soviet actors did between scenes.

During their stay, the writers will get further acquainted with contemporary American literature and art, go to shows and movies and talk with their American counterparts. They will visit New York, Boston, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Houston, among other cities.

Capital Gets A Dramatic Showcase

All Eyes Are On The Stage In Washington

By Ruth Moore

The play's the thing in a heightened sense in Washington's new Arena Stage.

A unique playhouse, designed by Chicago architect Harry Weese for a celebrated Washington acting company, makes it so.

It architecturally plays up the play as few other theaters do, for it is built around the stage and shaped by it.

The octagonal stage building and the adjoining oblong lobby and office building clearly herald a new day in the building of a theater.

ARENA STAGE, thus, is not just one more flat-faced structure along a city street. This octagonal descendant of the theater-in-the-round stands alone on a small rise just above the Potomac and in the heart of Washington's new Southwest—the former urban backwater which the capital now is converting into a prime community.

It says to even the most casual passerby that something marked, exciting and dramatic must go on here. People are drawn to it, to circle it, to admire it, and discover what is inside.

Inside the stage building is a 752-seat arena sloping in tiers down to an open rectangular stage. Every line in the theater focuses on that stage and everything irrelevant to the dramatic moment is separated.

THE AISLES POINT to the stage. The square "bridge" structure above, which openly and frankly contains all the lights needed by a modern theater, says again that this is the center and keeps the eye on the center of action and performance.

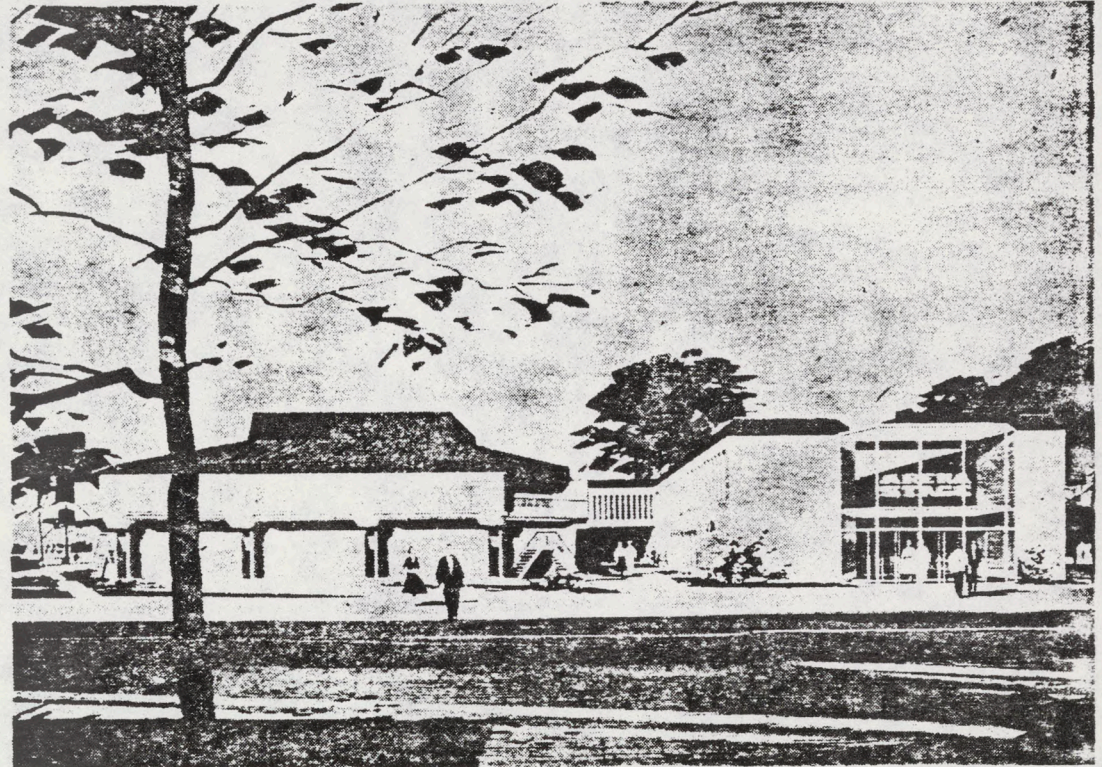
Here, too, there is no gilt and red plush to distract or quarrel with the drama being unfolded on the stage. The colors in the Arena are sand, and slate and natural wood, subdued tones that provide a setting, not a competition for the play.

The clatter and distraction of the usual theater lobby also are removed. The audience enters through a heavily carpeted, quiet "link," a gangplank-like passageway joining the theater and lobby building, to the upper aisle around the theater. With the exception of those using the boxes which are placed above the aisle—and since this is Washington a presidential box is included—the members of the audience go down to their seats.

THE ARENA PLAN, with no columns or overhanging balconies or anything else to interfere, provides perfect sight lines for each seat. And, because the seats surround the stage on all four sides, the audience is literally and closely gathered around the actors. It becomes a responsive part of the play.

Actors enter the open stage from the four corners at the stage level. They never tangle with the spectators as they must in many improvised theaters-in-the-round where both use the same entries.

In making the theater purely a theater, Weese and the Arena Stage did not forget the audience and the non-play intervals—arrival, departure and intermissions. A lobby designed to serve the audience adjoins. It is generous in size. At one end is a coffee and snack bar. Just off it are open balconies where people



Arena Stage, Washington's unique, and trend-setting new theater. The stage building at the left is separated from the lobby-office-rehearsal building at the right to make the stage

an uninterrupted focus of drama. The \$800,000 theater was designed by Chicago architect Harry Weese. The theater is in the heart of a re-developed area of the capital.

may step out to smoke. The walls offer plenty of space for photographs of the actors and art exhibits.

The colors again are beautiful neutral tones. In the lobby they set off the lively chatting, moving crowd as effectively as they do the stage in the theater proper.

THE ACTING COMPANY which built Arena Stage as its permanent home, was founded 11 years ago by a student and a professor. Theatrically Washington was at a low ebb, but the student, Zelda Fichandler, held the deep conviction that the capital needed and would support good theater, "not pablum."

The Arena Company moved into an old theater in a seedy part of town. The audience sat on bleachers, but they came. Even with capacity audiences, the 247 seats yielded barely enough income to pay pittance wages to an excellent company of actors.

Arena needed more seats. It found them in an old brewery on the edge of the Potomac. Only a few years remained before it would be torn down to make way for a new bridge, but in an old vat such excellent plays were produced that the season subscribers increased to 4,300. But the scheduled day of doom came.

Arena, with the support of its large and loyal following, decided to turn itself into a

public institution and seek funds for a permanent new home.

The Rockefeller Foundation contributed \$100,000, the Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation \$50,000 and the Twentieth Century Fund \$50,000. Several other sizeable gifts and many small ones ultimately made possible the \$800,000 new building.

NO BUILDING HAD EVER BEEN specifically constructed for theater-in-the-square, or the round. In many conferences with Weese, who designed some of the townhouses in Southwest, the acting company told him what they wanted. Then they taped "brainstorming" sessions in which all could freely discuss the theater needs.

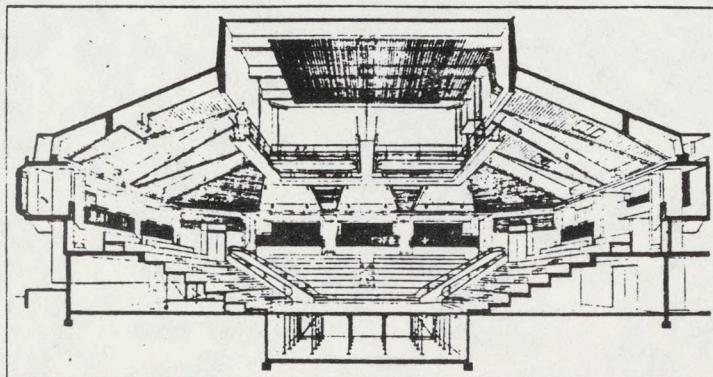
"The tapes were invaluable," said Weese. "We are now going to use this method for many of our buildings."

"If this building is entirely unique," said Mrs. Fichandler as the theater opened in November, "it is because it is the only theater in the world ever to be built so directly upon the experience of an existing theater company."

"AND IF IT IS beautiful and functional, it is because of the sensitivity of the architect to the nature of this experience and his artistry in giving it architectural expression."

The Arena opened its handsome, new building with the presentation of Bertold Brecht's colorful legend of good and evil, "The Caucasian Chalk Circle." Its atmosphere has been called a cross between Bruegel and the pseudo-Chinese.

On the Arena's stage it glowed. Fantasy could take on a reality of its own, and reality a truth that caught and delighted an audience. The Arena proved itself on its first night out. It was a theater for theater.



A cross-section of the stage building. Seats slope down in tiers to the central square stage, an outgrowth of the theater in the round. All lines focus on the stage. Colors are muted to enhance, not compete with, the drama.

The New York Times.

DRAMA

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, MARCH 27, 1960.

NEW HOME FOR ARENA STAGE

By RICHARD L. COE

WASHINGTON. ENJOYING the most successful season in its ten, Arena Stage is bringing to a climax its long-sought dream: a permanent home seems assured for September, 1961.

Most of the \$425,000 needed for the new building, its design just made public, is raised. Sell-outs this year have been the rule. A threatened hiatus in activity next season will not take place, thanks to almost unheard-of collaboration of District Government agencies planning approaches to a new Potomac bridge. Four foundations have been active in Arena's support on the basis of local contributions. The Capital's resident equity company can now look ahead four seasons, virtually a phenomenon in the American theatre.

Having started in a run-down movie house, Arena moved, four years ago, after a homeless season of inactivity, into the Hospitality Hall of the defunct Heinrich Brewery at the Potomac's edge. Approaches to a still unstarted bridge will demolish that property, affectionately dubbed The Old Vat. Director Zelda Fichandler and the sponsoring group's president, J. Burke Knapp, determined on a new, permanent location.

Governmental Aid

This was resolved through concurrent activity in Washington's Southwest Re-Development area, along Maine Avenue, home of fish markets and seafood restaurants. Promoted by William Zeckendorf, this is marked out as a fresh, future Washington. Various Government agencies involved, having noted Arena's community acceptance, agreed to allocate the land, previously intended for a park area.

This season couldn't have been a better climate for Arena's building fund. The theatre's artistic stature, constantly rising, has been accepted by the city's aware medium-income group as often more reliable than the general average of touring plays. The town's foreign visitors arrive with surprising knowledge of this theatre. Over the years its players and directors have gone on to wider audiences.

After "Major Barbara," a manuscript play ("Clandestine on the Morning Line," financed by Ford Foundation funds), "Three Men on a Horse" and "The Cherry Orchard" sold out the four-week run in the 500-

Theatre in Washington Raises \$425,000 For Building

sent theatre. "The Caine Mutiny Court Martial," which Washington originally saw before New York, held a fifth sell-out week in this Navy-conscious city and "The Iceman Cometh" is doing the same. (The O'Neill run ends April 3.)

Resident Director

Thanks to her own Ford Foundation grant, Mrs. Fichandler this year has been relieved of some chores by a resident director, F. Cowles Strickland, who follows such applauded visiting directors as Alan Schneider, John O'Shaughnessy, Warren Enters and William Ball. Her time and her husband, Tom's—on leave from his own work and an Arena official—has been spent on the future.

Their problem has been twofold: a suitable building and money for it.

After interviewing fifty architects, Mrs. Fichandler deter-

mined on Chicago's Harry Weese, whose creation for our embassy in Ghana attracted wide attention. His previous buildings in Chicago (the Hyde Park re-development project), Mexico City (a shopping center), Nassau (an office building) and Iowa's Drake University and Cornell College brought him notice, including an award from New York's Museum of Modern Art.

Like most contemporary American architects, Mr. Weese found theatre design a new idea, so few having been built in this generation. Further, Arena, a stronghold of central staging, is not the traditional picture-stage theatre.

Viewing an Arena performance last fall Mr. Weese asked himself, "Is it a valid idea? Is this concept of theatre a make-shift?" After "getting my focus in the first act," Mr. Weese decided it was valid. "One becomes oblivious to the blur of faces in the rows behind the actors. The actors seem to hold us in the palms of their hands."

750 Seats

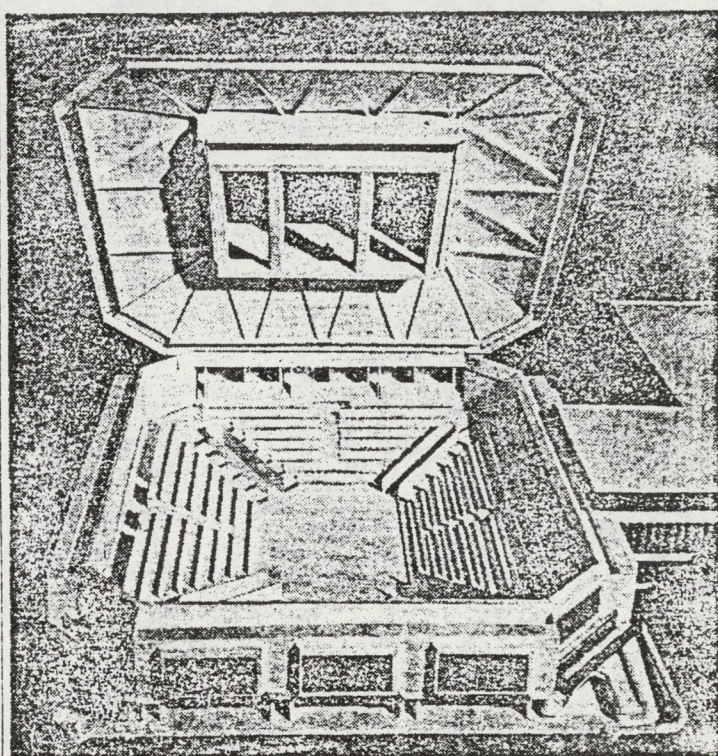
The theatre itself will be the central building of what will seem to be two joined by a "link." Instead of patrons entering the auditorium on stage level, as at present, they will enter the four tiers of seats from the top via a main circulating aisle around the square. There will be 750 seats, 250 more than at present, over half the additional in boxes along the top of the tiers. These will amount to an overflow for three-quarter staging, a new tack for Arena for its previous homes have made this style impossible. A device that is in the works will make it possible to remove seats along the fourth wall with reasonable ease.

The auditorium proper will be linked by a passageway-lounge to the "working area" building, where offices, workshops, dressing rooms and lobbies will occupy two floors, the actors entering the auditorium section on the ground floor.

Those unable to take the stairs of the present auditorium (on the second floor) will rejoice in a special ramp entrance. The exterior of the brick and concrete structure, Mr. Weese says, "will look like what the building is." There will be ample adjacent parking and the Potomac inlet promises a pleasing setting.

Financing has had the advantage of Mr. Knapp's knowing leadership. He earns his living as a vice president of the International Bank and became interested in the theatre through his wife, a former British actress, Hilary Eaves.

The theatre is a project of the Washington Drama Society, a nonprofit association. Funds have been raised from friends, members and stockholders in the form of loans or gifts.



Bill Engdahl, Hedrich-Blessing.

ARENA STAGE—A model of the new Washington theatre. The roof of the theatre-in-the-round is raised to show its interior. Harry Weese, architect. (Story at left.)

THE BIG TEN

My Fair Lady.....	1,686
The Music Man.....	949
Flower Drum Song....	654
La Pluma de Ma Tante..	636
A Majority of One.....	466
A Raisin in the Sun....	438
Dentry Rides Again....	389
Once Upon a Mattress..	354
Gypsy.....	350
The Miracle Worker....	186

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VARIETY

Wednesday, March 9, 1955

Tiny Arena Stage, D.C., Springboard to B'way For Actors, Directors

Washington, March 8.

Arena Stage, local theatre in-the-round, winding up its 6th season of professional repertory, is emerging as a talent springboard to Broadway. Established as part of the capital's show biz scene, and a fave with Embassy Row and official circles, the shoestring operation is becoming a factor in the development of new talent for the big-time.

Outstanding example of "local boy makes good" on Broadway is director Alan Schneider, who came to Arena via Catholic U., whose School of Speech and Drama has long been a training field for professional theatre. His Broadway credits include "Remarkable Mr. Pennypacker," "All Summer Long" and the current "Anastasia" and "Tonight in Samarkand."

"All Summer Long" was also the stepping stone to a professional career for Clay Hall, the juve who played the lead in the show here and then on Broadway. Two other members of the "All Summer Long" cast, both vets of Arena, are currently making Broadway bows. George Grizzard in "The Desperate Hours" and Marian Reardon is in "Tonight in Samarkand," playing opposite another Arena product, Robert Pernell.

Other Arena-ites who have gotten the nod for a try at the big-time include Richard Shepard, featured in the recent "Doctor's Dilemma" revival at the Phoenix Theatre, N. Y., and Elliott Silverstein, who made the jump from directing "The Crucible" in its central staging version to tv directing chores for "Omnibus."

The off-Broadway circuit, also, has players who cut their acting teeth at Arena. Frances Sternhagen, daughter of a district judge, and another Catholic U. grad, is at Cherry Lane, N. Y., in "Thieves Carnival." Ann Meecham and Michael Higgins, who played guest stints at Arena, have also since crashed New York.

At the moment, the 300-seat Arena is looking for larger quarters as a result of its best h.o. season to date. Averaging six-week runs it is now offering its fifth production of the semester, "The World of Sholom Aleichem."

Arena Stage Becomes D. C. Landmark

When a half dozen people can take a barn-like hall and turn it into a \$100,000 business to which over 150,000 persons have contributed, Washington business circles should take notice.

(On Tuesday night, October 7, the Arena Stage begins its fall season and moves into its third year as a successful financial venture in the Nation's Capital. The confidence with which the managers and resident company of the Arena look to the coming year differs in no little degree to that feeling in 1950 when Edward Mangum and Zelda Fichandler stood with a small group of adventurers in Sidney Lust's Hippodrome Theater on New York Avenue.)

Amazing Ingenuity

Arrangements had just been completed to rent the old movie house for Washington's first theatre-in-the-round, to be known as the Arena Stage. Mr. Mangum and Miss Fichandler had been able to raise some \$25,000 from about 40 stockholders who felt along with the crops of founders that Washington needed its own resident-company theatre and that the theatre-in-the-round idea would be most practical here.

Literally using their bare hands and an amazing display of ingenuity, Mr. Mangum, Miss Fichandler and their association tore up seats and arranged a four side, grandstand seating. Closets were turned into dressing and prop rooms, hallways into offices. Friends and supporters became painters, carpenters and interior decorators. When opening night arrived, with the cast consisting of non-Equity (the actors' union) players, the impresarios were too physically exhausted to notice the immediate success which their Arena Stage enjoyed.



—Chase Photo

THREE LEADING characters of the Arena Stage production of Eugene O'Neill's "Desire Under the Elms" rehearse for the opening of the play on Tuesday night, October 7.

That success, both financial and cultural, has continued and broadened in the ensuing two years.

Capacity of 247

The resident company of players, now all Equity endorsed and numbering around 16, has joined with non-equity "jobbers" to secure this success. Unburdened by star performers and employing the economical arena staging method, the Arena Stage has even been able to declare a dividend for its investors. These profits have been shown despite the relatively low price of seats,

the small capacity of 247, and the competition of two other theatres.

To maintain the average of a sell-out house in two out of every four performances, the Arena has continually produced well-directed and well-performed plays. Testimony to the caliber of these productions is the growing list of Arena partisans in its audience. Not limited to any group, but rather a cross section of Washington life, the Arena's audiences have been sprinkled with such enthusiasts as Madame Pandit, former Indian Ambassador, the British Ambassador, Lord Franks, leaders of government, and such business leaders as members of the Board of Trade's Cultural Development Committee. A subscription series to six Arena productions this fall has already been subscribed to healthily.

Uses New Talent

The Arena's financial and cultural success does not overshadow the contribution the theatre is making as a starting point for young people interested in acting and in writing for the stage. Both untried players and untried playwrights have been forwarded at the Arena.

Now under the sole direction of Miss Fichandler, the Arena is continuing to brave the uncharted seas of the theatre-in-the-round in Washington. The current production, "Desire Under the Elms," directed by Alan Schneider, is a challenge in itself. Other ideas—new productions, a new theatre, improved properties—are slowly coming closer to fruition. With the support that Washington theatre-goers have shown thus far for this successful financial and cultural experiment, few dreams seem unattainable.

The New York Times.

SUNDAY, JULY 1, 1951.

Section

2

DRAMA—SCREEN—MUSIC—ART
RADIO—TELEVISION
DANCE—RECORDS

THEATRE SUCCESS STORY FROM WASHINGTON

By RICHARD L. COM
Drama Editor, The Washington Post
WASHINGTON.

WHILE impressive groups have been bemoaning the theatre's narrowing public, a small band of Washington actors, getting Equity stock minimums, has been reaching increasingly faithful audiences which pay \$1.50 and \$1.90 a seat.

The capital's Arena Stage, seating 247, is in the black after ten months of operation in seventeen plays. A permanent company of eight gets the Equity stock minimum of \$50 per week, juggling other leads at the Equity figure and paying at least \$25 for walk-ons.

The plays, ranging from Molière, Goldsmith, Shakespeare, Gogol and Synge to Edwin Justus Mayer, Elmer Rice, John Steinbeck and E. P. Conkle, have been efficiently and, on occasion, very well done, notably, of all things, "The Playboy of the Western World," officially admired by the local Hibernian Society and brought back for a second two-week run. Mail orders for this one came from Pennsylvania and West Virginia as well as the surrounding Maryland and Virginia.

Financial Situation

Weekly production expenses average between \$1,600 and \$1,800 with a maximum income of \$2,800. The group was set up for \$15,000, raised from local investors holding shares from \$50 to \$1,000 each. Since most businesses and, notably, theatrical businesses, do not pay off their initial investments so quickly, the heads of Arena Stage feel they have made notable progress in a community of many but modest incomes, where previously community theatre had never succeeded beyond society's indulgence. Like the other legitimate theatres and concert halls here, the playhouse operates on a non-segregation basis.

Co-directors Edward Mangum

and Zella Fichandler, probed their possibilities for eighteen months, finally taking a lease on New York Avenue's fading movie house, the small, aged, but air-conditioned Hippodrome, and recruiting their backing locally. They imported several of their lead players from the North, but most of the original eight members of the company have Washington ties.

Mangum's Washington theatre background goes back fourteen years, during which he was direc-

tor of the Mount Vernon (Methodist) Church Players, a unique amateur organization promoted and financed by the church as a community service. A graduate of Catholic University's speech and drama department, he went to the staff of George Washington University, from which he resigned for his arena venture.

Mrs. Fichandler, too, has been active both as actress and director locally and is fully aware of the special local problems, recognition

of which, as to income and tastes, has been vital to Arena's success.

Both learned from previous community theatre attempts here the importance of keeping prices down. Some nights are sold to organizations and, as elsewhere, Friday and Saturday performances are the most popular. The theatre also plays Sunday nights and is dark Mondays.

One of the toughest problems has been finding suitable plays. "The Inspector General," for instance, turned out to be an especially happy choice, its yarn of official corruption selling out in this Government-alert city during the rest of the Kefauver committee hearings. The Russian ambassador attended the opening and was observed to chuckle heartily, though he offered no quote for the benefit of the press.

Recent Bill

Conrad Aiken's dramatization of his chilly story, "Mr. Arcularis," once done at London's Hammer-smith, was given recently "Twelfth Night" is now completing Arena's longest run—four weeks. Coming up is Percy MacKaye's tale of New England witchcraft, "The Scarecrow," for a three-week run.

The management's aim is to keep running through at least August 16 to make a full year's activity. Then all hands will lay off for a few weeks with a few shifts in player personnel possible for the fall.

Though pleased with both the financial and critical results, Arena Stage is most proud of the fact that it is making live theatre economically possible both for audiences of modest means and actors of willing determination.

"If a hundred cities across the country would try what we're doing here," say the directors, "some 1,500 theatre people would find steady employment and the theatre's satisfaction would find thousands of new admirers."

"THE HAPPY TIME"



Roger Dana and Leora Dana, in the comedy at the Plymouth, giving its 604th performance on Tuesday night

Drama News and Reviews

Arena Stage, Aged 6 Months, Has Had Fine, Brave Life

By Jay Carmody

Arena Stage will be six months old on Thursday and this is a noteworthy thing.

In life, life in the large, six months is not much. It is different in the theater. To attain that age is to begin to feel like "Oklahoma!" or "South Pacific" and to have packed enough of experience to think of writing a memoir.

Zelda Fichandler and Edward Mangum, the leading (sometimes bleeding) spirits of Arena, have had moments of feeling 100 times six months old as a result of their first semester on K street. What they feel more intensely is that they would not trade it for any other similar period they have ever lived.

They are sold on theater-in-the-round and they become the more sold with the sale of every ticket to a growing number of steady, obviously satisfied customers. Although they never knew you could get this tired and somehow go on, or that there could be so many problems in the world, they are glad to have this much of wisdom.

It was two kinds of theater that began in the converted Hippodrome movie house last August 18, both tentative as all kinds of theater always must be. One was central staging, of which everyone talked, by about which no one did anything until Mrs. Fichandler and Mangum. The other was repertory. Both have treacherous qualities going all the way back to the Greeks.

Also, it turned out happily, both had enough novelty to start Arena with promising momentum. The community was glad to see not only the product, but the spirit brave enough to go into production.

Arena's first play, "She Stoops to Conquer," was a hit. It was booked for two weeks, ran three and one-half instead and played to 5,620 patrons. That is a solid number of theatergoers to start with but, being realistic, Arena's management waited. How many of these came out of curiosity, just to see theater-in-the-round, the management could not say until later. It was excited, but cautious, a sensible attitude.

Box office continued to look old enough, however, with even fewer of the normal ups and

downs than might have been expected. There is still something of a simple curiosity factor in the audience's structure, but 4,000 saw Arena's production of "The Playboy of the Western World" in a two weeks and one-half run last month, it was more exciting than the initial success of "She Stoops."

On the subject of what Arena has learned of play selection, Mrs. Fichandler is properly still tentative. "It is hard to isolate the factors that make for good box office. However, it would seem that the most popular plays are those of which every one has heard, but which have not been seen to death." Classics and revivals of recent plays have done well. The one original, "The Delectable Judge," did poorly, but it was poorly publicized and the reviews were not very good.

Plays which did well include "The Firebrand," "Pygmalion," and "Of Mice and Men" (the latter despite lukewarm notices).

One puzzle is the relative failure of "Children of Darkness," one of the best Arena productions and one of its liveliest plays.

Over the six months, much to its delight, Arena has established an intimate, friendly relationship with its audience.

"From the beginning," Mrs. Fichandler and Mangum say, "we have had countless letters and telephone calls in appreciation of our productions, the 'atmosphere' of our house, and the courteous handling of our box office. Arena is delighted that customers ask for repeats on seats to earlier plays and the acceptance of its patrons that 'every seat is a best seat' is actually the case."

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"How has it gone?" this correspondent asked.

"Over the past six months actors, technicians, and staff have come more and more to be a working team," the directors say. "Of course, all is not sweetness and light. Everyone is overworked and chronically tired. Our schedule keeps us on a merry-go-round. Tempers sometimes are short and nerves frayed. But by and large, there is harmony all over the house, from the dressing rooms to the box office. We are very happy about this."

Incidentally, Arena's married couples, of which there are several, have worked out what they think is a neat balance between the career and home problems. If the theater gets the major attention now, it is because its demands are the greater because of its